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AND SO THEY PROCEEDED UP THE STREET TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE CAMP.

OR,

The Tussle With Satan.

The Story of the Ruction at See-Saw.

BY ED. L. WHEELER,
AUTHOR OF "DEADWOOD DICK" NOVELS, ETC.

CHAPTER I.
SATAN SAM OF SEE-SAW.

"GOOD-MORNING, governor."
"Ah! Good-morning, Mr. Bristol. Glad to see you."

Such was the exchange of greetings in the office of the Governor Woodlow one morning, and the two men shook hands warmly.

Deadwood Dick, Jr., had entered quietly and found the governor busy with some papers at his desk, but the moment Dick spoke and the

governor saw who it was, everything was dropped.

"Well, I am here at your call, sir," Dick remarked.

"And I am glad you came, too. I hardly hoped you would pay any attention to my request this time."

"Not pay attention to it! Why not?"

"I thought perhaps Deadwood Dick the millionaire would not care to trouble himself further with detective work."

"Your thought was a mistake, governor. Not even riches can woo me from my chosen vocation. Wealth has only strengthened my hand by giving me another weapon with which to carry on the warfare with rogues."

"Well, I am glad such is your determination, Dick, for you are wanted now, and badly, too."

"What is the case?"

"Not greatly unlike the one you handled for me at Danger Divide, perhaps, though it has less vital interest for me personally. There is about the same class of rascals to be dealt with here, if, indeed, not worse ones, and it will be no child's play for you if you undertake the new campaign."

"My work has been anything but play, sir, and especially so the last few cases I have handled. I came pretty near to getting finished off up North there, as you may have heard, and as it is some time now since I have tried my hand I am eager for something to stir up my blood. I spent several months down on the coast, recuperating, and that, together with several weeks at Bristol City, has given me pretty near a full half year of idleness."

"I am glad to find you so ready for excitement, and I think you will get it in this case—perhaps all you want. I did not know of another man to call on in the emergency. The case has baffled my own men, and two or three sheriffs and a score or more of deputies seem powerless to do anything. You can judge by this that it is no ordinary matter. In fact, there are some features about it which stamp it as a very extraordinary case. But, I will give you the particulars and let you estimate it for yourself."

"Yes, let me have the facts."

"The story is not a long one. Off here to the north, up in the mountain fastnesses, is a comparatively new mining-camp called See-Saw. It is, from all accounts, no exception to the rule, as mining-camps go; a pretty hard place, I have no doubt, but one in which law and order are still observed to a certain extent. It has one rich mine, owned by Henry Hancroft and several others. You have heard of Hancroft; a man of considerable importance in this Territory."

"Well, it was Hancroft who first called upon me for help in the matter. It appears this camp is under the fear of a single outlaw, a fellow known as Satan Sam, and it is said of him that his name does not half do him justice. He has terrorized the whole region, and it has become almost impossible to get anything of value to or from the camp in safety. So, Hancroft has requested me to send him that dare-devil detective who handled my case at Danger Divide—meaning you. What do you think about it, Richard?"

"You said a moment ago there are some features which stamp the case as extraordinary. What are they?"

"True enough; the point escaped me. Well, on two occasions they have come pretty close to nabbing the fellow, and might have done so had he not escaped them in a wonderful manner. He led the pursuers to the edge of a small lake, and in plain view of them all leaped off into the water, where he disappeared to rise no more. On the first occasion they thought the fellow was drowned, and the camp spent a night of rejoicing over the event; but, no! next day he turned up and robbed the stage within a mile of the camp. You see, there is something mysterious about the fellow. What do you say?"

"Has the lake been examined where he jumped in?"

"Yes; the men I sent there first, together with the sheriffs and their aids, made an examination, but they failed to find anything to explain away the fellow's escape."

"Perhaps he swam under water to the nearest shore."

"They claim not. At the point where he sprang in was a sheer precipice, so that he could not possibly escape on that side, while to remain under water long enough to swim the half mile to the other shore, in either direction, of course was impossible. It is claimed that he simply dived in, and that was the last of him. And he must have gone down, for if he had showed his nose anywhere some one would have seen it and a volley of bullets would have been sent after him."

"It seems peculiar, but I recall something of the kind; if I am not mistaken I think I can soon explain the mystery of it all. But, is this Satan Sam alone? or has he a band of cut-throats around him?"

"Some think he is alone, while others believe he is the head of a band. There is a band there at See-Saw,—a sort of secret society who call themselves the Scorpions of See-Saw; but they claim to be working against Satan Sam, trying to wipe him out."

"Are these Scorpions known to the citizens of the camp?"

"Not outside of their own circle, it appears. But, since their exact number is unknown it cannot be said how many or how few are in the band. They claim to be a sort of Vigilance Committee."

"Then no crimes have been laid to their doors, eh?"

"I believe not, according to Hancroft's statement, and my men support what he says. On the other hand they have performed two or three lynchings for the good of the camp."

"It is strange these men have not been able to overhaul the outlaw, then, if they are so well organized."

"So I think, too; and I am of the opinion that the Scorpions and Satan Sam are working together; if not, indeed, that he is captain of their band."

"It looks strange, to say the least, that nobody knows anything about the personality of these Scorpions, if they are what they profess to be; and strange, too, as I said, that they fail to capture the outlaw."

"On the other hand, it is thought they are operating with extreme secrecy in order not to allow the fellow to learn who they are."

"Your men tried to find out something about them?"

"Yes; but failed."

"Questioned the leading citizens?"

"Yes; nearly every one; but no one would admit any knowledge of the Vigilance men."

"There is a case here, sure enough," Dick decided. "I'll tackle it and see what will come of it. By the way, what crimes have been laid against this outlaw?"

"Two or three murders, and a score or more of bold robberies. He has become the dread of the camp, as I said before, and the whole region round about is in fear of him. Life and property are not safe, and Hancroft is about in despair."

"Well, to sum up, what is wanted of me is to hunt down this outlaw and hand him over to the officers."

"That is it. We do not care anything about the Scorpions, since they are not feared by the citizens; but, if you find our suspicion is true, that they are in league with the outlaw, then they must be shown up."

At this moment of the conversation the door opened and one of the governor's aides appeared.

"An important letter, sir," he said, extending a sealed envelope to the governor.

"Brought by messenger?" queried the governor, as he glanced at it and saw there was neither stamp nor postmark.

"Yes, sir."

The governor broke the seal and read it.

As he read his face assumed a troubled expression, and when he had done he handed the open letter to Dick.

It read like this:

"CAMP OF SEE-SAW, May 12^h.

"GOVERNOR WOODLOW:—

"It has come to my ears that you have been asked to send Deadwood Dick up here after me. If you value the life of your prize detective, don't do it. He won't be worth a straw against me. Besides, I have my hands full now with the Scorpions, and can't entertain any more friends at present without somebody's getting hurt. Just take this as a gentle hint and keep your pet at home.

"Cordially yours,

"SATAN SAM."

Deadwood Dick looked at the governor and the governor looked at Dick.

"What do you make of it?" the governor asked. "Isn't this getting somewhat interesting?"

"It begins to grow a trifle exciting," answered Dick. "Is the messenger, who brought this waiting?" he asked of the man who had brought the letter in.

"I suppose so, sir."

"Will you have him brought in here, governor? I would like to question him a little."

The governor gave the order, and the aide disappeared to fetch the man, but when he returned he came alone.

"He's gone," he said. "Can't see anything of him."

"Just as I expected," said Dick. "He was not going to be caught if he could help it. Here is proof that Satan Sam is not acting alone."

"That is so! He had some one to send with his message, it seems. That being the case, it does look as if our suspicion is the right one, that is, that the outlaw and the Scorpions are working together."

"Exactly. And here is a clue to begin work upon."

"The letter?"

"The handwriting."

"Yes, I see. Bristol, you must sift this matter and bring that fellow to a speedy reckoning. He has defied us both, now."

"I'll try it."

"Do you go alone?"

"Entirely alone, sir. Not knowing what you wanted of me, I did not bring any one with me from Bristol City, and I'll set out from here at once without going back there."

"You are a strange man, Bristol. Here you are, a millionaire, and yet you will not give up your business of rogue-catching. You risk your life, and there is no reward worth the trouble; in fact, it would be an insult to offer you remuneration now. You are a strange fellow."

"You forget that my oath is registered to devote my life to the work of uprooting evil and to the task of bringing evil-doers to justice."

CHAPTER II.

A PECULIAR PAIR.

THE Camp of See-Saw was a wild hole, full of wild characters. It was a comparatively new town, and its "boom" was at its height. Little need to describe the place in particular, since it was a "city" of the usual mining region sort.

That its name was a peculiar one will not be denied. It was suggestive, nevertheless, when once its meaning was known. The camp had existed for a long time without any name at all, until finally, the discovery of the "Big Injun" made a name for the place a necessity.

The "Big Injun" was the leading mine of the camp, now the very life of the place, and on finding they had struck it rich and were likely to become famous, the camp must have a name.

Said one man:

"In view of the fact that this hyer camp has been one of many ups and downs s'pose we call it See-Saw and be done with it."

That suggestion was greeted with a howl of approval, and so the camp was named.

Yes, a "city" of the usual sort, at the height of its "boom" so there is little need for more particular description.

Here were the mines and the diggings, plenty of cabins, shanties and tents, a fair-sized hotel, some stores, and saloons in abundance; the principal and leading one of the latter being the one cycled "The Tank." The hotel was known as the "Royal Roast," kept by one Snickerson Snooks. Of the other resorts nothing in particular need be said.

Of this camp, the head was Henry Hancroft.

He was a man between thirty and forty years of age, an active, athletic fellow, and one who held the reins with a tight grip.

Manager of the Big Injun as well as part owner, he was also the mayor of camp, and his word was law. When any unruly cit disputed his authority, or tried to "shoot up" the town, Henry "sat" on him promptly.

And, as a general thing, it required but one "sitting" to bring about the desired effect.

Day was drawing to a close and night was preparing to take possession when down through the gulch that led to this remote camp came a lone rider.

He was a rough-looking fellow, roughly dressed, and was astride of about as homely a specimen of mule-flesh as was ever seen.

The man was almost as sorry-looking, though he seemed to be whole in limb and sound in body so far as a casual survey could discover; but he was apparently no stranger to poverty, and he certainly was no stranger to dirt. He looked greasy and grimy, and he sat the saddle with the air of one who was afflicted with chronic laziness.

He was riding listlessly along, apparently paying little or no attention to anything, when suddenly, something caught his eye, causing him to draw rein.

And that something was a placard posted on a tree beside the trail, so close that no one could pass that way without seeing it.

"Whoa, Spavins!" the man sung out. "Let's take a look at this hyer, and see what et is, anyhow."

The mule stopped without effort, and the man proceeded to read the notice.

It was in these words:

"NOTICE!"

"To the Galoot who answers to the title of DEADWOOD DICK JUNIOR:—

"You had better turn tail to and go right back. You are not wanted here. We mean to capture Satan Sam ourselves, and we do not want any help. We have heard that you have set out for this place, and not knowing you personally we take this means of telling you you are not wanted.

"By Order of the President

"THE SCORPIONS OF SEE-SAW."

"What do ye make out o' that, Spavins?" the man questioned his mule, when he had read. "Et's a darn peeculiar notice, now ain't it? Ther Scorpions of See-Saw, eh? That 'arsounds as ef et has a sting to it. Waal, et don't 'fect us, I reckon, Spavins, so we'll push on. Gee-up!"

It required more of an effort for the mule to start than it had to stop, but it got into motion finally and carried its rider slowly along up the gulch in the direction of the town.

When, at length, the miserable looking combination entered the camp, night had settled over all, and the lights in the various buildings were aglow.

The usual sounds were to be heard, as the newcomer approached, but there was one sound heard above others which was somewhat unusual.

This might have been intended for a drum, but there was nothing very drumlike about it except the incessant beating. A boy beating with sticks upon a pumpkin could have made as much music.

But, there it was: "Rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub, rub-a-dub, dub!" over and over and over again, in one dull, monotonous strain that was harassing in the extreme.

"Pilgrims from yan!" exclaimed the man on the mule, as he listened to it. "What in all creation kin that be, Spavins? Must be ther war-drum to call ther citizens to ther council lodge, I should say. Sufferin' mackerell! it's enough to make a man git up an' slap his granddad, hang me ef et ain't!"

Slowly they pressed on, the dilapidated mule keeping time to the unceasing thump-a-thump, and as they advanced the beating seemed to draw nearer to them.

As mule and rider came into the light where it fell across the street from the windows of the first shanties of the camp, the drummer was met, face to face, and the man on the mule stared at him in amazement.

There was light enough to see and be seen, and the drummer stopped for a moment and the two disreputable-looking specimens surveyed each other leisurely and critically. What the man with the drum saw need not be described again, but what the man on the mule saw will bear telling.

What he saw was—a miserable specimen of the genus bum. The fellow had on a hat—to begin at the top—that looked as if it might be a relic of ages past, so worn and shapeless it had become. Then came an apology for a suit of clothes through which the bare skin could be seen in numerous places. On the fellow's feet were a boot and a shoe, and it was hard to say which was the worse for wear.

There was, in the uncertain light, a showing of dank, tangled, matted hair appearing around under the edges of the old hat, and a beard of similar description covered the fellow's face. Between hat and beard, in front, were to be seen a pair of pale, weak, watery eyes which looked like holes burnt in a blanket—to quote that old simile, and just below the eyes, in the center foreground, was the end of a rosy nose that gleamed like a strawberry of largest size.

But, this was not all. Hanging in front, suspended from his neck by a rope attached to each end, was an empty beer keg, and this was the "drum" upon which the fellow had been beating with the sticks he held in his hands.

When the two had surveyed each other for a few seconds, the man on the mule cried out:

"Howlin' Hiram! What do ye call yerself, anyhow, stranger? Have they got any name fer ye hyer? And what in tarnation do ye pound on that 'ar keg fer? Come, enlighten me, fore I keel over from sheer curiosity."

The fellow with the beer-keg drum laughed. "Ha! ha! ha!" he chuckled, in a voice which plainly showed that rum had hollowed his shell to a dangerous extent. "You don't ketch on, do ye, stranger. I'm workin' a snap hyer, I am, and don't ye forget it."

He laughed again, and gave several more thumps upon his unique drum.

"I fail ter see where the snap comes in," declared the man on the mule. "I should call et hard work fer nothin'. But, mebbey you ar' drummer-up fer some local guzzle mill—a sort o'

walkin' sign fer some fire-water dispensary or other; if not, then I'd guess you ar' a recruiter fer ther salivated army."

"Ha! ha! ha!" cackled the bum. "You hit all around ther spot, pard, but you don't ring ther bell nary a time. This ain't none o' them things you have mentioned, but a reg'lar private snap, an' I'm workin' et meself fer me own personal good an' comfort. Guess again, pard, an' see ef ye can't hit et."

"No use; ef et ain't what I've said, then I give et up."

"That's what t'other jackass did. Ha! ha! haw!"

"See hyer!" cried the man on the mule. "Ef you mean ther 'ar fer a joke I fail ter see ther p'int, and ef ye mean et fer an insult to Spavins, my mule hyer, then I'm goin' ter take et up. Do you hear me?"

"Gosh! Don't git r'iled, mister. I was only gittin' off a joke, that was all. Who ar' you, anyhow? Let's neighbor a little together, ef you don't mind. My name is Tom-tom Tom."

"Pilgrims from yan! What a name! Whar did ye pick up sech a handle as that, anyhow?"

"Ha! ha! haw! Sort o' stumps ye, does et? Well, et's easy explained, fer my name is Tom, and when I begun ter work this hyer snap ther boys said Tom was out tumpin' his tom-tom; an' from that et was only a step to Tom-tom Tom. See?"

"Yes, I see now. But, what is this snap you are workin'?"

"Don't ye git aboard yet? Well, I'll 'splain et to ye: Ye see, I'm chronically 'flicted with ther popular ailment called poverty, and that bein' ther case I haven't ther necessary ante fer my spiritual provender. Hence, I had ter hustle to git an idea to supply ther need."

"And ye don't mean ter tell me ye do et this way, do ye; by beatin' on that empty keg?"

"Prezackly, stranger! Whenever I want ter indulge, all I have ter do is ter git out my tom-tom and march up an' down ther street thumpin' et, and et ain't long 'fore somebody who gets tired o' hearin' it will buy me off at ther price of a horn. Do ye lean to now?"

"Well, that's 'riginal, by ther national ef et ain't! But, et's a wonder they don't kill ye instead of buyin' ye off. I should think et would get ter be tiresome after a while."

"Ha! that's ther beauty of et! That's whar I have got ther bulge on 'em beautifuler. They declare openly that I ain't worth the powder to blow me over, and that I ain't worth ther trouble of killin' with a club; so, thar's whar I have 'em. Oh! et's a snap, and I'm workin' et fer all I'm worth."

Again he paused to beat upon his "tom-tom" to let the citizens know he was still around.

"And now what's your call-by?" he demanded, when he stopped.

"My name?" said the man on the mule. "Well, I am called Barnabas Balaam. I am a missionary unto the heathen, and that's what has brought me here. It seems quite fitting that we should meet as we have. What will you charge to escort me into the camp to the tune of your tom-tom and publicly introduce me? That's all you will have to do; I'll do the rest. What do ye say?"

"Show me a shiner, pardner, and et's done. Couldn't 'ford to drop my regular snap fer any less, seein' that I have been drummin' fer twenty minutes or more, and it's time somebody bought me up. All that labor's wasted, you see."

CHAPTER III.

AN IMPORTANT ARRIVAL.

THEY were, of a truth, a peculiar pair.

One was about as disreputable in looks as the other, the only difference being, now that it was brought to notice, that the man on the mule did not show evidences of hard drinking.

Mr. Balaam went down into his pocket, and after fumbling for some moments he finally brought up a silver quarter which he handed to his new-found friend, greatly to his delight. The bum looked at it critically, and put it in his mouth for safe keeping.

And then he said:

"Et's a bargain, partner. You stiffen up a little and have a little more style about ye, and I'll thump ther tom-tom and escort ye into town 'cordin to ther condishuns."

"And you won't object to my singin', will ye?"

"To your singin'?"

"Yes. You see, the more noise we make the more attention we will draw. I am a singer from a family of singers, you bet!"

"I don't object, pard; but, do ye think et's safe?"

"Safe?"

"Ye see, ther boys may think I have taken ye in on my snap, and they may take it into their heads that this is too much of a good thing and open fire on us. I don't set up no claims to bein' bullet-proof, ye know."

"Oh! I don't think thar is any danger, Thomas-thomas Thomas—I think that is more dignified t' an Tom-tom Tom. You see, they probably wouldn't open fire without giving some warnin', and the minute they say Stop, I'd close my yaup-trap instanter. I don't think thar's any danger."

"All right, then; we'll resk et. Now, then, hyer goes!"

The bum faced around at that, and stepping out at a regular stride, beat upon his "tom-tom" with more than usual vigor.

Mr. Balaam put his mule in motion and fell in with the procession, and when they had proceeded in this manner for a little distance he laid back his head, opened his mouth, and began to sing:

"Gayly the troubadour sang o' Kafoozalem,
As he came ploddin' his way from Jerusalem,
And the old Huc-a-buck he-aring him come,
Cried Rum-a-tum, rum-a-tum, rum-a-tum-tum!"

And so they proceeded up the street toward the center of the camp, the muleteer bawling as loud as he could bawl and the man with the tom-tom beating as hard as he could beat, while the astonished citizens flocked to the street to learn what it all meant.

By the time they had reached the Royal Roost and The Tank the crowd was great, and when they stopped there, in the center of the camp, the man with the tom-tom stopped his noise and cried out:

"Citizens of See-Saw, behold! 'Low me ter interdoose Balaam and his ass. This is Balaam, pointin' to the man, "and this is the ass," indicatin' the mule."

A howl of laughter greeted this, and the man on the mule waved his arms indignantly to enjoin silence.

"Thou knave!" he cried, shaking his fist at Tom-tom Tom. "You have meanly misrepresented me! What said I about Balaam and his ass? I say you have meanly misrepresented me. Citizens, I am Barnabas Balaam, and this is my mule, Spavins; I am not the Balaam of old, nor any kin to him so far as I know."

"Your humble pardon, pard," craved the man with the tom-tom. "I got it a little discomfuddled, that was all. Well, you ar' interdoosed, anyhow, and so our little compact ends. I'll now go and lubricate. Adieu fer the present."

With that, and a roll of the sticks upon the so-called tom-tom, he bowed himself out of the crowd and entered The Tank.

"Miserable specimen of a weak and degenerate race!" cried Mr. Balaam, with a wave of the hand after him as he disappeared. "See what rum has done. Behold! a being once stamped with the likeness of his Maker, now only a thing doomed to the eternal pit of perdition!"

"A parson!" some one exclaimed.

"A sky-pilot sharp!" cried out another.

"Bet he's run up ergainst a tough snag hyer, anyhow."

"You mistake, you mistake!" cried Mr. Balaam. "I am not a parson, you bet. Ther 'ar ain't my lay this deal. But, I'm a missionary unto the heathen, and that's what has brought me here. I'm an advocate o' temperance, I am, and I'm here to take the demon by ther neck and choke him. Do ye see? I have come hyer to show ye that rum is only another word for ruin."

"Wants ter deprive us of our bitters!" cried one fellow in genuine alarm.

"He's taken a big contract, one that he'll never get through with," answered another.

"Won't ye come in and take somethin'?" a third invited. "Ye look weak and and weary and in need of soothin'-syrup."

"Tempt me not!" cried Mr. Balaam. "Tempt me not!"

"He called us heathens," some fellow reminded. "What ort we ter do ter him fer that?"

"Make him take et back!"

"Yas; make him take water!"

"Turn him over to ther Scorpions!"

"Make him take a dose of ther genuine article!"

"That's so! Make a convart of him an' so disarm ther crank!"

"Would ye delight to see me fall?" Mr. Balaam solemnly demanded. "Verily, I take nothing but water."

"Water! That's only fit ter wash feet an' dishes! Ask Tom-tom Tom ef et ain't so. He wouldn't tetch et no sooner'n he'd take p'izen."

Stranger, you had better give et up an' slide out."

"Say, what will ye take fer the mule?" one man called out.

"What will I take for Spavins?" cried the temperance advocate. "Money cannot buy him, gentlemen. Nothin' but death can ever part Spavins and me. Thar never was a mule like Spavins; thar will never be another when he is gone. He is not fer sale."

Mr. Balaam had a way of dropping into dialect and out again, whether it was noticed or not.

When the crowd had indulged itself further in the way of joking and jesting Mr. Balaam was invited to dismount and stay awhile.

By this time Tom-tom Tom had reappeared upon the scene.

"Yas," he cried, "dismount and stay, by all means, pard. Ef you can't do us any good hyer et is pretty sartain ye can't do us any harm, so ye ar' welcome. By ther way, that shiner ye gave me done ther business up brown. Now I won't have ter beat ther tom-tom again this evenin', 'tain't likely."

The man accepted the invitation, and when he had given careful and positive directions concerning the care of his mule, entered the hotel.

Here he inquired for lodgings, but before he was answered there was a counter-question concerning his ability to pay.

Inquiring the price, Mr. Balaam went through his various pockets until he had raked together money enough to meet the claim, when he was allowed to register and a room was assigned to him.

It was time now for the stage to arrive at See-Saw, and while Mr. Balaam was in conversation with Snickerson Snooks a shout was heard, and the stage came rolling into the camp.

See-Saw had a stage twice a week, and as it made railroad connection at a distant point it had to be governed by railroad time, and hence it was after night when it reached its destination.

The arrival of the stage in your mining-camp is an event of importance, and the whole population of See-Saw was out when the stage drew up in front of the Royal Roost.

There were several passengers to alight, but only one in whom we may be interested.

This one was a young man, good-looking, supple and athletic, who sprang up the steps to the piazza with a light and easy stride.

"Who is landlord here?" he asked cheerily.

"I am, sir," was the response made by Snickerson Snooks.

"All right; you are the man I am looking for. I want you to put me down for room and grub for a week."

"That's jest what I'm hyer for," declared Snooks. "What sort o' room do you want?—jest, medium, or small?"

"The best you've got," was the assurance. And the young man's appearance bespoke his ability to pay for it. "I never travel second-class, sir."

"That's all right, sir. Hyer's ther autygraff album; jest quill your call, ef ye please."

The young man drew the register to him, and in a bold, free hand inscribed the following:

"RICHARD M. BRISTOL,

Bristol City, Ariz."

"Now," he made inquiry, "is there a gentleman around here named Henry Hancroft?"

"Wull, I should allow thar is," answered the landlord. "Hancroft is mayor of this camp and manager of ther Big Injun Mine."

"He's the man I want to find. Can you tell me where I shall be likely to fall in with him after supper? Supper is the thing of most importance now."

"Why, he's most gen'ly hyer at stage time," responded the landlord, looking around. "He is a reg'lar boarder hyer, you know. Ha! thar he is, now. Mayor, hyer's a gent would like ter see ye."

A man came promptly forward, a man between thirty and forty years of age, with a keen, shrewd face, a pair of piercing eyes, and one who was not by any means bad-looking.

"A man to see me?" he asked.

"Yes, sir; if you are Henry Hancroft," was the response.

"Well, I am. What can I do for you?"

"My name is Bristol, sir; Dick Bristol. I am better known as Deadwood Dick, Junior."

"Ha! Deadwood Dick, eh? The governor sent you, of course. Well, I'm glad to see you; but I looked for you to come in disguise."

The mayor offered his hand, and it was grasped heartily.

"I didn't see the necessity of coming in any disguise," was the response. "I can adopt one, you know, if necessary. The day of disguises is past, to a certain extent."

"Well, it doesn't matter, I suppose. But, you want supper, so I'll go in with you and we'll talk while you eat. Come right this way, Mr. Bristol."

The mayor led the way, and the two passed from the room.

CHAPTER IV.

THE INTERVIEW WITH HANCROFT.

No sooner had the two disappeared than Barnabas Balaam made a move to follow them, when the landlord interfered.

"Hold on, there, sir," he called out. "Where are you going?"

"Howlin' Hiram!" exclaimed the temperance advocate, "ain't I in et, too?"

"In what?"

"Why, they're goin' fer supper, and that's what I have anted fer. I want ter draw ter fill, this hand."

"All right; but supper ain't quite ready, and they have gone in there to talk a little. I'll tell ye when ther board is spread fer you."

"Ef that's the case I'll draw my belt in another hole and wait. See to et that I don't get left, though, landlord. When you ar' ready, I want to git in on ther ground floor, as et wur."

"You won't get left, sir."

So, Mr. Balaam drew in his belt another notch and waited with what patience he could.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hancroft had conducted his friend into the dining-room, where they took seats at the table to talk while supper was waited for.

"So, you are Deadwood Dick, hey?" Mr. Hancroft observed once again, as an opener.

"That is what I am called, sir," was the answer.

"And you are the fellow who has been raising the merry dickens with rascals of every stripe, eh?"

"That is the reputation I enjoy, sir. But, as I never care to talk about myself and my exploits, suppose we take a look at the case for which I have been called here."

"Just as you please, sir."

"I understand you are troubled with an outlaw, here, who wears the suggestive name of Satan Sam."

"Exactly."

"The governor told me about some of his doings. Has he shown his hand of late?"

"No longer ago than the day before yesterday."

"Ha! and what did he then?"

"Robbed the outgoing stage of a shipment of bullion."

"And did the passengers allow him to get away with it without making any attempt to take him?"

"There was no passenger, and not a soul knew the bullion was aboard. It was put in the box at night, and our agent at the other end had been told to look out for it."

"Then not even the driver knew about it?"

"Not even he, sir."

"Strange."

The detective was thoughtful for some moments.

"Your agent at the other end is a man to be trusted, sir, of course?"

"If we did not think so we would not trust him. Yes, he is to be relied on. At any rate we have confidence in him."

Another break, during which the detective was silent and apparently very thoughtful. In fact, before he questioned further, supper was announced ready.

Scarcely sooner the announcement than Barnabas Balaam bounded into the room and made a dash for a place at the board, dropping into a chair opposite the mayor and his companion.

"Didn't know but thar might be a rush," he remarked, "and I was bound not to get left. I'm too hungry to take ther resk of losin' my grub."

"You'll probably get enough to fill you up," assured the mayor. "Supper has been over these two hours, and there are only the stage-passengers to feed, you see. So, there was really no occasion for you to break your neck."

"Glad ter know that, anyhow; but, I was bound to be in at the first swipe, no matter who else got left. Now, don't let my ontidy appearance affect your appetites any, gentlemen, fer I 'sure ye nothin' you kin say or do will 'fect mine. I'm here on business, and there's no time to stand on ettykit, or anything of that sort. Wade in and fill up, is my motto."

"Exemplify your motto, then," the mayor urged, laughing.

The detective had not smiled, and had hardly taken any notice of the new-comer. His manner was still very thoughtful.

"This case is a peculiar one, Mr. Hancroft," he now remarked. "You tell me the stage was robbed day before yesterday, and a quantity of bullion taken. That bullion had been put aboard secretly, and not even the driver knew it was there. You had notified your agent at the other end to look out for it. He is a trusted man, and is not to be suspected. In spite of all, Satan Sam met the stage and carried off the bullion. That sums up what you have told me."

"Yes, that sums it up, sir; but, had we not better talk this over a little more in private?"

"Oh! that does not matter. These facts are known anyhow, I suppose."

"Yes, certainly; but—"

"Then it does not matter. I shall not make any attempt to work in secret on the case."

"Well, if that is your plan, all right; but, really, I cannot see what good you are going to do if you make yourself known so openly and make no attempt at working secretly."

"Leave that to me, sir. I understand a society here, the Scorpions, are working in secret, and have discovered nothing."

"Well, that's so."

"Do you know who these Scorpions are?"

"Scorpions!" suddenly exclaimed Mr. Balaam, as well as he could exclaim at all with his mouth filled as it was, and he held his knife and fork both loaded with further supplies for his inner man; "that reminds me of somethin' I seen when I was comin' here this afternoon."

"What did you see?" asked the mayor, in a tone of annoyance at the interruption.

"What did I see?" was the return. "I'll tell ye what I seen: It was a notice tacked up on a tree, and it was a warnin' to a feller called Deadwood Dick, signed—Scorpions of See-Saw. It warned ther feller to turn face-about and git, or words to that effect."

The detective appeared interested.

"Where do you say this notice was, my man?" he asked.

"Et was on a tree a few miles out from ther camp hyer. I seen et as I was comin' in."

"Sorry I did not see it myself, but it was too dark, of course. As I am Deadwood Dick, I would like to know just what it had to say to me."

"I thort et mought interest ye. Well, et said somethin' to this 'fect, as near as I remember et: That you was not wanted hyer, 'cause these Scorpions had made up their minds to capture Satan Sam the'rselfes and they didn't want no help from any outsider."

"So that is the case, is it? Well, considering that I arrived by night and could not see the notice, I am here."

"This is news to me," said Mr. Hancroft. "I had not heard anything about the notice."

"What do you know about these self-styled Scorpions?" asked the detective.

"I know nothing about them, sir."

"They are against the outlaw, I understand."

"Decidedly, sir, as such a notice as this would testify. But, who they are I know not."

"But, you suspect?"

"Well, it is pretty well understood they are some of our citizens here, but not a single one of them is known. They guard well their secret."

"I should say so. Do you think they really mean what this man reports having seen posted?"

"I guess they do; all the more reason why you should have come here in disguise. I cannot understand why you did not do so."

"I'll tell you: I thought these men, the Scorpions, would be willing to allow me to work in with them in their efforts to capture the rascal. I was acting upon the understanding I had of the case."

"Well, I am disappointed in you, Mr. Bristol, I must say. You are not such a man as I imagined Deadwood Dick to be."

"I'm sorry for that, Mr. Hancroft."

"Howlin' Hiram!" here broke in the temperance advocate, Mr. Balaam. "Give ther young man a show, boss. Give him a show, and don't discourage him right at ther start. That ain't no fair, nohow."

"Suppose you attend solely to filling your stomach," suggested the mayor, in no gentle tone.

"Pilgrims from Yan!" cried Mr. Balaam. "I can't fill no faster'n I am fillin', nohow. I'm gorgin' et down as fast as it will go, in ther good old American way. Et's root hog or die, these days."

"Well, attend to your gorging, then, and do not meddle with what does not concern you."

Will you stay, Mr. Bristol? or are you going to take the hint and retire from the field?"

"Why, I shall stay, of course!" was the response. "I may not be able to accomplish anything, seeing that this secret organization is against me, but I'll do what I can. I suppose you desire me to stay, and that you will do all you can to help me in the work."

"Oh, certainly, only I am afraid you have weakened your chances by coming here so openly. However, that cannot be helped now."

"No; that is beyond remedy, if it needs remedy. Have you any clew that you can place in my hands that may be of service to me in getting upon the outlaw's trail? Anything will be of use."

"We have nothing whatever. If we had, we should not have remained so long idle. No; you will have to begin with nothing."

"Where is this lake the governor spoke about?"

"Between two and three miles from here, off to the north."

"Can we go there to-morrow and take a look around?"

"Certainly; but, little good that will do you."

"I want to see the place, nevertheless, sir. I have undertaken this task, and I mean to push it through if I can."

So they talked, and the meal progressed the while.

Mr. Balaam was shoveling the food in at a prodigious rate, apparently eating against time. Nor did he finish till the detective had done and had left the room.

When, finally, he had filled up, he went out, and later on he went forth to view the town, and, perchance, give a lecture on temperance. He seemed to have but one well-grounded idea, and that was his warfare against rum.

CHAPTER V.

PROSPECTIVE FUN INTERRUPTED.

ABOUT the time when Mr. Balaam set forth from the hotel, the beating of the "tom-tom" was heard again.

This was evidence that Tom-tom Tom had again become thirsty, and considering that no one had bought him up that evening, he evidently felt justified in torturing the citizens further.

He was coming down the street in the direction of the hotel and the leading saloon, drumming away as though his very life depended upon his efforts, taking the middle of the street for his march, and that dull, tuneless, monotonous tum-a-tum was exceedingly grating upon sensitive nerves.

"Poor, debased, misguided man!" cried Barnabas Balaam, so that those around him might hear. "What a pity to see a human creature sunk so low! I could weep for him; I could indeed."

Mr. Hancroft and his detective were on the piazza, and heard the remark of the temperance advocate.

"It's just his worthlessness that saves his miserable life," declared Mr. Hancroft. "If he were worth the trouble, somebody would have killed him long ago."

"Seems to me he would tire of it, if you were to let him drum it out once," the detective remarked.

"The trouble with that is, sir, that some weak-nerved citizen gives out before the bummer does. Only for that I think it would fetch him."

"Suppose you let him try it once, and see which will give out first. If it gets unbearable to any one, let that one take a walk for his health. You are mayor of the camp and a word from you ought to be sufficient."

"That is very good in theory, sir, but in practice it would not work worth a cent; for, you see, I am not seldom the very one to give out first. And I am in no mood to listen long to his infernal racket to-night, I can tell you."

One or two others hinted at shooting the disturber of the peace on the spot, but all immediately agreed that it seemed too much like murder to kill so harmless a "cuss." The bummer did not possess a weapon, and rum had long ago sapped all the strength he ever had.

"Let me suggest somethin'," spoke up Barnabas Balaam.

"Well, what is it?" asked the mayor.

"Let some one buy the fellow up, and let him enter the den of iniquity to indulge his depraved appetite. Then will I enter, and pointing to him as an example, deliver one of my telling lectures against the evils of intemperance."

"That's ther idee!" cried one man.

"Et will be all your life is worth," warned another.

"Why so, friend?"

"When you talk against likker you hit most of us right whar we live and have our bein', ez et war, and anyhow I think they'll bounce you out of The Tank in less'n no time."

"Well, the fun will be all on your side, anyhow," declared the temperance advocate. "I am willin' to take all the risks."

"Anything in ther way of fun," cried one man. "I'll ante to buy Tom-tom off, and that will set ther ball ter rollin'."

"All right, let 'er flicker, pard," another urged on.

"Here, Tom-tom," the first fellow called; "fer ther luv ov mercy let up on that infernal drummin' and I'll give ye the price of two doses. Let up, I say, and come hyer and git ther stuff."

The bummer stopped his noise and came forward.

"May ther mild-eyed goddess o' Peace smile upon thee, thou good Samaritan!" the bummer cried. "I didn't know I was so thirsty to-night, but what I have had has only made me crave fer more. I feel immense, 'cept fer my thirst, and I reckon I was good fer drummin' all night, ef need 'd been."

"Wal, fer ther luv ov mercy put et away, and here's ther tinkle to ante fer a couple o' fillers. Don't let's hear ther darn thing ergain to-night, or you may git a chunk of lead next time."

"This hyer will settle me, I know. This will fill me right up, and I'll crawl away and sleep ther sleep of ther innocent and good."

So, accepting the money, he unslung the tom-tom from his neck and with a bow to the crowd made right across the street to The Tank.

"Miserable, miserable, miserable mortal!" sighed the man of temperance, as he led the way after him.

"Here is going to be some fun," said Mr. Hancroft to his companion. "Let's step over and see it. The Tank is the leading place at night, anyhow, and you don't see the town if you don't take it in."

"All right; I'm in for anything that promises amusement. There's no chance to do anything in the way of business to-night, anyhow."

"No; and I have doubts about your being able to do anything at all, Bristol. You made the mistake of your life by coming here without disguise. I'm afraid you will not accomplish anything."

"You have told me so before. For the present let us drop the matter. As this peculiar Mr. Balaam has hinted, would it not be well for you to give me a chance before you condemn me? I think so."

"Let it so be understood, then. I'm a blunt man, and perhaps too outspoken in my views. Don't take offense, anyhow."

"I never do, where none is intended."

By the time they reached the door of The Tank and entered, Tom-tom Tom had already ranged himself at the bar and called for his favorite poison, having now put his tom-tom around upon his back after the fashion of a knapsack.

Barnabas Balaam strode forward into the room in a tragic manner, and turning, pointed with scorn at the man at the bar.

"Behold!" he cried. "Manhood cast off, and the human sunk lower than the brute of the field!"

Tom-tom was in the act of lifting his glass, but he paused and looked around.

"Does that 'er remark 'ply ter me?" he demanded.

"It does," was the answer.

"Then you had better take et back, that is all," the bummer warned. "Ef ye don't thar may be a set-to hyar."

"I never take back the truth," was the rejoinder. "See to what a state your appetite has brought you. What an example of the curse of rum! Men of See-Saw, look upon him!"

The fellow was a picture of distress, sure enough.

Having once described him we need not touch upon that again, unless to say that in the full glare of the light he looked ten times more wretched than he had in the lesser light of the street.

He attended to the draining of his glass, and after wiping his mouth upon his tattered sleeve, faced the temperance advocate.

"Do ye know ye hev 'sulted me?" he demanded.

"I thought you past all sense of shame, or all spirit of resentment," was the solemn retort.

"Wull, ye will find thet I ain't, then. Now, ye hev got ter take that all back or I'll mount ye; ye kin do jest as ye please."

"Thou poor wretch!" cried the man of temperance, pityingly. "Know ye not that rum

long ago robbed you of all the strength you ever had? It is so! Judging by your size, the time has been, no doubt, when you were a powerful man; but that day is long gone by."

"You're a dad-ratted liar!" the bummer cried.

He was angry, now, and squared himself for fight, brandishing his fists in a furious way.

"Keep your temper!" placated the temperance advocate, coolly. "It is rum that fires the brain and makes you rave. Let us reason the matter and prove it in a rational way."

"Then you take back what ye said, or I'm a dad-ratted—"

"I take back nothing," was the interruption.

"I am here in the cause of temperance, and you are a glorious subject for the basis of a lecture."

Getting warmed up to it, the man was dropping all signs of dialect, and, no matter what he was now, it was evident that at some time or other he had been a man of some education.

"Yas, and you'll be a glorious subject fer ther horspittle, too, ef ye keep on that way," cried Tom-tom, irately.

Mr. Balaam waved him to silence.

"I am here in the cause of temperance," he cried. "I want to show you by example what rum will do for you. Behold!" pointing at Tom-tom, "the remains of what was once a powerful man—"

"Yas, and what's powerful enough yet," cried the bummer. "This is fine return fer ther way I escorted ye into town this evenin', ain't et?"

"I paid you for the service," he was reminded.

"But, boys, I made one mistake when I introduced him," cried the bummer. "I said Balaam and his ass, ef ye remember. Ther four-legged critter out in ther stable is Balaam."

The howl of laughter that greeted this unexpected sally was great, and Mr. Hancroft, and even his distinguished companion, joined in.

As for Mr. Balaam, he took off his hat and put it under his arm, making the bummer a most profound bow.

"I acknowledge the shct," he said humbly.

"You hit me that time, and I am proud to own that whatever rum has done to your body it has not yet quite shattered your mind."

"And you'll find that et ain't done so much damage to my body as ye might think," the bummer cried. "Ef ye don't believe et, jest ketch on."

He presented himself in wrestling attitude as he issued the challenge.

"But, it has done damage incalculable to your appearance, sir," declared the cold-water man. "See the bloated form; the pale, weak eyes; the tell-tale nose; the rank, dank and alcoholic signature plainly written everywhere—"

"Dad-rat yer imperdence, anyhow!" the enraged fellow cried. "I'm goin' ter take you and wipe up ther floor with ye, see 'f I don't! I won't stand no sech talk from you nor anybody else! Clear ther road hyer, citerzens, and I'll show him how much damage—"

"Hold on, hold on!" cried the man of temperance. "I am no fighter, friend; no fighter at all. I don't want to have any damage done to me, nor do I want to do damage to any one else. We can settle this matter without coming to blows. It is a mere question of right or wrong, regarding the argument I have offered. I'll put my strength of arm against yours to prove whether it is better to drink water or rum."

"I'll put ther strength of my arm ag'inst your nose, that's whar I'll put et," snarled the bummer. "You have 'sulted me, an' you have got ter answer fer et. I don't 'low—"

He was interrupted just there by a loud shouting without, and there came the sound of a rapid discharge of pistol-shots, together with the beat of a horse's hoofs.

A break was instantly made for the door, to learn who was "shooting up the town."

CHAPTER VI.

IT SMACKS OF MYSTERY.

WHEN some dare-devil spirit gives vent to his superfluous good-feelings by "shooting up" the town, in your Western camp, it is not according to social ethics for him to kill anybody, and hence the crowd generally rushes to the street to learn who the shooter is.

In this case, as said, there was a general break for the door on the part of those who were in The Tank when the shooting began.

The first out were just in time to see a horseman coming tearing down the street at a terrific pace, shooting as he came, and yelling at the top of his voice.

Those who were not among the first were in time to see this dare-devil horseman as he dashed,

past the saloon, and were able to hear what it was he was so loudly shouting.

"Take me if you can!" he was shouting. "Defiance to you all, and more defiance to Deadwood Dick! Here I am, Satan Sam the Outlaw! Ha! ha! ha!"

He was going as rapidly as he came, and those who were among the last to pour out from the saloon beheld something disappearing in a cloud of dust, to the merry snapping and cracking of revolvers.

It had all taken place in less time than it has taken the reader to follow these lines.

"Satan Sam!" was the shout that immediately went up.

And immediately following that was the rattling of a score or more of ready revolvers as a volley was sent after the disappearing outlaw.

The volley was nearly done, only a few tardy shots being heard, and the mad rider was almost beyond range, when there came a shot that was louder and more spiteful than any that had preceded.

And it was a shot which took effect.

The shouting and firing of the disappearing horseman were suddenly checked, and in the dim light he was seen to throw up his arms, reel, and then fall from the saddle.

"He's hit, by ther great!" one man shouted, and instantly there was a mad stampede to reach the spot where he had fallen.

Those nearest were, of course, upon the ground first, where the wild rider was found lying in the dust with his life's blood fast ebbing away.

The horse had stopped, and stood near at hand, trembling in every limb with fear and excitement, and as the crowd rushed up some men took charge of the animal while others gave attention to the man.

There was not enough light, with the crowd around, for the man's face to be seen plainly, so he was lifted and carried to the front of a nearby store.

By this time the whole camp was on the spot. "Who is it?" demanded Mayor Hancroft, who, with the detective, pushed his way to the front.

"Why, he said he's Satan Sam," was the response. "Ef et is him, he is done fer this time, sure enough. Stand out of ther light, boys."

"Yes, get out of the light," the mayor ordered.

The crowd fell back so that more light was had upon the form of the dying man, and the mayor and the detective pushed in and knelt beside him.

"Disguised, as I live!" cried the mayor.

"Sure enough," agreed the detective. "I'll remove it."

The man had on a false beard, which, in his fall from the horse, had become disarranged.

As the detective spoke he removed it.

"Bart Miller!" exclaimed those around, immediately.

"You know him, then?" questioned the detective.

"Know him!" they cried. "We know him as well as we know ourselves!"

"Then it seems my business here is at an end, if this is the outlaw. There is no mistake about that, I suppose?"

"How kin thar be?" cried one man. "Didn't he go past a-hollerin' that he was Satan Sam?"

"But, who'd ever 'a' thought et?" another put in.

"I—I—I'm not him," the man faintly gasped.

"Ha! he declares he's not the outlaw!" cried the detective.

"Which he naturally would say, to escape hanging," observed the mayor. "His own words have given the lie to that, now."

"Silence, all," ordered the detective, "and we'll hear what he has to say. It is plain that his time is short."

"It will prove itself," said the mayor. "If he is Satan Sam, this is the last of him, and if not, then we'll hear from Samuel again, that's all."

"Yes; but, let's get his last words. What have you to say, my man?" bending over the fallen man.

"I'm—I'm—I'm not Satan Sam," was the faint response. "I'm only Barton Miller, and—and they all know me. I was only playin' et off that way, and—and—"

"And it has been a mighty dear play for you," spoke up the mayor. "No man but a natural born fool would have undertaken such a thing, and I thought you had good sense."

"Let me hear his words," the detective cried, now a little sharply. "He had some motive for what he did, and I am sure of that."

"Question him, then, while there's life in him."

"Why did you do it?" the detective asked, not unkindly.

The man tried to respond, but there was only a gurgle, and with a gasp he had passed beyond hearing.

"Too late!" said the detective, rising. "I know he had a story to tell, but the poor fellow was taken off too suddenly to admit of it. Now, who and what was he, citizens?"

"Why, he was a sort of shiftless, dare-devil spirit who has been living here at the camp for some time."

"What do you think about his being Satan Sam?"

"I leave that for the crowd to say. I'll give my own opinion later, if I haven't given it already."

"Well, what's the opinion of the crowd, then?"

"Et's my opine that Bart Miller never was Satan Sam," spoke up one man. "Ef he was, he was playin' a deep game, that's all."

"And I know he wasn't Satan Sam," another declared.

"Ha! that is spoken in a positive way," cried the detective. "How do you know what you assert, my man?"

"I'll tell ye Mr. Bristol. Ye see, one day when we got after ther cuss and had him lively ter git till we lost him at ther lake, Bart Miller was in ther party that was after him."

"If that is so the question is settled."

"And et is so; I kin prove et by every man that was with us."

"Yas, et's ther fact," spoke up another of the crowd; "I was thar, too, and I kin swear to et."

Two or three others supported the statement.

"You see," remarked the detective, upon whom every eye was fixed and to whose words every man listened, since his reputation was not unknown there, "the fellow's dying declaration was the truth, mayor."

"Well, I could have told you he was not Satan Sam; in fact, didn't I as good as tell you so?"

"Perhaps."

"I certainly did. Didn't you hear me say to Bart that I thought he had more good sense than to play off such a part for fun? Bart Miller never had the caliber of Satan Sam."

"Then, the question is, Why did he play the role?"

"And I give it up."

"Jest fer a little excitement, mebbey," one man suggested. "Bart was a sort o' dare-devil, anyhow."

"He got left on ther fun, then, and bad, too," spoke up another. "Ther poor feller got plugged fer everlastin', and et was no revolver what done ther business fer him, either."

"You think it was a rifle, then?"

"Sure. Didn't you hear ther bark of et? No revolver talks in that tone o' voice, I'm tellin' ye."

"What's the matter? What's the matter? What's the matter here?"

So panted the voice of a new-comer upon the scene, and Barnabas Balaam was seen crowding to the front.

"Look out who you're a-pushin'," a citizen cried, "or you may find out what's ther matter fore ye expect to. None of yer crowdin', now!"

"Pardon, pardon," apologized Mr. Balaam. "But, you know how it is when a man is excited and fired with curiosity, and I'm in both states now I assure you. Who has been hurt?"

While talking he had made no pause in his efforts to get to the front, and now he had got there.

"A man killed!" he immediately cried, answering his own inquiry. "Oh! my! This is terrible! Another example of the evils of intemperance and a warning that should be heeded by old and young—"

"Dry up!" was shouted at him. "This had nothin' to do with drinkin', and et ain't no time now ter 'low you ter get off any palaver about et."

There was no chance for Mr. Balaam to say more, and he would not have been permitted to say so much had he not done so accompanying his rush to the front when for the moment he drew attention.

"The question is not answered," reminded the Western detective. "Why was this poor fellow playing the role of Satan Sam? Was it for a purpose? or was it only a foolish venture of his own?"

"I don't see how that will ever be cleared up," responded the mayor. "You see, Bristol, he was a reckless fellow and one who would not hesitate about doing such a thing for fun if the idea occurred to him. It is possible the idea did occur to him and that he acted upon it."

"Very well, then; if we take that view of it

the matter is explained very simply. But, who shot him?"

No one responded to that.

"You see, the man who fired the shot took him to be the outlaw, and so need have no fears about acknowledging his identity."

Still no one stepped forth to confess it.

"If that man is in the crowd," called out the mayor, "let him own to it, for it is all right, anyhow, seeing that it was a mistake. Don't be afraid to speak up, my good fellow."

But, the "good fellow" was not forthcoming. Nor could he be induced to admit the deed. And so the matter was left, perhaps a very simple affair, perhaps a very deep and mysterious one. And who could say which it was?

CHAPTER VII.

THE MERITS DISCUSSED.

THE horse upon which the man was riding when killed was known. It was a speedy bay belonging to Snickerson Snooks, the hotel proprietor.

This discovery naturally led to some investigation in that direction, but it amounted to nothing of much importance. It was found that Miller had had a horse of his own in the same stable.

Having the reputation he had, of being something of a dare-devil, it was advanced that perhaps, with his intention in mind of playing a trick, he had thought it best to take as speedy a horse as he could lay hands upon for the purpose, and hence his choice.

Be the explanation what it might, it was not brought out.

The body was taken care of to be prepared for burial, but gradually the excitement died away.

It had served one purpose, however, and that had been, to break up for a time the quarrel between Barnabas Balaam and Tom-tom Tom. They did not meet again that night.

At the hotel, after it was all over, the detective and Mr. Hancroft had a further talk about it and other matters.

"Then you admit that it baffles you, eh?" Mr. Hancroft observed.

"Nothing to my discredit to admit that it does, seeing I am a stranger here," was the response.

"Perhaps not; but, I had heard such great things of you that I have rated you high. I suppose I still must give you time, Mr. Bristol."

"Rome was not built in a day, Mr. Hancroft."

"So I have always understood, Mr. Bristol; but, if this case is to take as long as the building of Rome I think we may as well retire from the field and leave it to Satan Sam."

"Give ther young man a chance," spoke up the landlord. "He's a stranger hyer, you know."

"And one of your guests, eh, Snooks? Well, we'll give him a chance, of course. Mr. Bristol, I'll see you again to-morrow."

"All right, sir."

Hancroft took his leave and the others took up the talk where it had been dropped.

"Ther boss don't seem ter be willin' to give ye much of a show, does he, Mr. Bristol?" the landlord remarked.

"Oh! well, that does not matter," was the response. "You see, this thing has become wearying to him, and he is impatient, that is all."

"I s'pose so; but et seems to me he might give ye more time before he goes to talkin' like he does. But, it's no affair of mine, I s'pose, and I am out of it. What say, Mr. Balaam?"

"Oh! it's neither here nor there with me," was the reply from that quarter. "I am interested in my warfare against rum, you know, and have mighty little time to devote to anything else."

"You might devote all your time to something else, fer all the good ye can do hyer."

"I suppose so, but it isn't my nature. However, as I said right at the start, give the young man a chance and see what he can do. He hasn't had time enough to get acquainted."

"That's so."

"And by the way, landlord," Bristol spoke up, "what do you know about the Scorpions of See-Saw?"

"Nothin', sir, nothin'."

"Perhaps you are afraid to tell what you do know."

"Ha! not me, sir! Et takes more'n a scorpion, or a batch of 'em, to give Snickerson Snooks a scare, you bet!"

"Then you do not know a single one of these fellows?"

"Not a one of 'em, sir."

"Do you know any one who does?"

"Nary. I tell you, Mr. Bristol, them 'ar Scorpions are wonderful sly fellers, all around, and nobody can git onto 'em."

"It would seem so, and I suppose there is no use my trying. Still, I should like to make their acquaintance, after the attention they have shown to me."

"Don't try to poke 'em out, young man," spoke up a man who had been listening to all.

"And why do you advise that, old man?"

"Because, when a fellow fools with scorpions he is likely to get stung."

"Perhaps you know something about them, sir."

"Not a thing, no more nor anybody else."

"Then why your warning?"

"Cause I don't see any good that is ter come of et ter you. Ther Scorpions ar' all right; et's ther outlaw that's playin' ther mischief around. Give all your attention ter him and you'll do."

"The way you speak leads me to suspect you must know more about the Scorpions than you admit."

"Don't think that er 'tall, sir. All I know about 'em is what everybody else knows: that they seem ter be friendly to'rds this camp but pi'zen 'gainst Satan Sam."

"May I ask who you are?"

"My name is Ben Blunt."

"That's a good name, and, to guess by the sample I have had of you, I should say it fits you well."

"Folks tell me it does, anyhow. But, that's nothin' ter do with et. Ef you want any help in this hyar game you kin call on me and I'll be thar."

"You mean that?"

"Cert."

"All right. I take you at your word, and maybe I will have to call on you to help me before the game is ended."

"Be et understood, though, that I don't take no part against the Scorpions; I was talkin' only 'bout ther outlaw. Ef you want me to hook with you on this trail I'm right along."

"Very well, Mr. Blunt," was the response, as the detective turned to leave the room, "I'll see you again to-morrow."

It was by this time late, and the detective retired for the night.

"What do you think o' him, Blunt?" asked Snooks, as soon as his guest had passed beyond earshot.

"Et ain't so much what we think as et is what we know, when Deadwood Dick is ther subject," was the response.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Jest what I say. Ef Deadwood Dick don't ketch on right off soon, with a whoop and a jump, don't take et into your head that he's asleep, fer you may git left. That feller has got a reputation to back him."

"That's all so, I have no doubt, but et hits me about ther same as et hits ther boss," said Snickerson. "Et seems ter me he'd orter hev come hyer onbeknownst to any one."

"Trust him ter know what he's about," said Blunt.

"Well, don't et look so ter you?"

"Right on top, yas; but what's underneath? Mebbe he knowed these hyer Scorpions would be likely ter find out anyhow, so he wouldn't give 'em no trouble."

"Might be so, might be so. I don't p'tend ter know much about et. One little thing I do know, though."

"And what's that?"

"They all know Deadwood Dick now, and he can't make a move without givin' 'em every chance in ther world ter outdo him at et."

"Yas; but, ther cat don't allus jump ther way et looks, ye see, and he may have somethin' else in mind. I have heard of Deadwood Dick often enough, though I never seen him afore, and I'm willin' ter wait an' see what comes of 'et all."

"Gentlemen," here spoke up Barnabas Balaam, "what comes or doesn't come, I am going to bed. To-morrow I must begin my warfare in earnest, and I must be rested for the battle. All these minor things, such as outlaws, Scorpions, and the like, are of no moment."

He rose as he spoke, and with a yawn moved toward the door.

"Then ye do mean ter tackle ther hopeless job, do ye?" queried Snooks. "I s'pose ye have spoken fer a coffin."

"A coffin?"

"Exactly. Ef ye push ther boys too hard, ther chances ar' they'll make ye ready fer plantin'. I'm only sayin' this as a gentle hint, that's all. Don't 'magine that I'd threaten."

"Oh, no, I wouldn't think that. But, I'm taking all the risks. My mission must be fulfilled, and only a coward would hang back. My

life has been given a willing sacrifice, and if it be taken my labors are done. No, nothing must stop me in my work."

This was said with much dramatic force, and was accompanied with a flourish of the hand that was intended to be simply magnificent, apparently.

Those present laughed, and Mr. Balaam was about to open the door when suddenly and without warning the distracting thump-a-thump of the tom-tom was heard and the temperance advocate stopped short.

"Fallen man!" he sighed. "Must he again disturb the repose of the camp by beating upon that thing? Is he so degraded that he must have more drink? Behold, a creature fallen beneath the level of the swine in the pens. Verily, citizens, your camp has one virtue."

"And what's that?"

"Patience. Without that, and much of it, some one would certainly rise up in his wrath and slay that miserable creature."

Tom-tom Tom was coming, there was no mistaking that.

"You had better buy him up, Mr. Balaam," one man in the room suggested.

"And furnish him with the means of extinguishing the faint spark of reason that remains in him? Never!"

"But, you won't get any sleep till some one buys him up."

"Then I'll have to grin and bear it, I suppose, unless it gets too very bad, when I may—"

"May have to give in and stand the treat, hey?"

"Said I so? I was about to add—may have to get up and practice upon him with my old horse pistol. There may be as much virtue in lead as in silver, if rightly applied."

Tom-tom came on, reaching the hotel, passed on down the street to the opposite end of the camp, and from there marched back again, beating the while in his own inimitable way, and more than one citizen was by this time calling down maledictions upon his head.

"Verily," cried Mr. Balaam, "I believe I shall have to go out and give him a drubbing myself. This is more than mortal can stand. I shall have to give him the proof that muscles fed upon water are superior to those soaked with rum. Verily, no man can stand this long and hold his patience. I wonder he has not been killed."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SCORPIONS HOLD COUNCIL.

ON came Tom-tom Tom, pelting away with might and main, regardless of everything, evidently bent upon having the price of one more drink before he holed himself away for the night.

But, the hour was late, and there were some citizens, tired and sleepy, who were in no mood to stand his noise long. And these were they who, as mentioned, were calling down maledictions upon his head as he came along, and it was evident they meant "business."

"Put that danged thing away," cried one, "or I'm danged ef I don't spit a nugget o' lead at yer!"

"We hev had enough o' that fer one night," shouted another. "Et won't take long fer us ter git out and hang ye to a tree, and we'll do et, too."

"Only one more price, citizens," the bummer asked. "I only want a taste ter go ter bed on, and you'll hear me no more. Only a little night-cap, and we'll all go to sleep together."

"Put et away," yet another called out, "or I'll bore ye once jest fer luck. We ar' sick of et."

"What's ther use o' wastin' lead on me?" argued the bummer, still beating away. "You would only have the expense of a funeral on your hands fer nothin' at all."

"Et wouldn't be but oncet, anyhow," was the retort. "Now, last time, will ye let up on that racket?"

"Jest ther price of one—"

"Bang—ping!"

There was the sharp crack of a revolver, and a bullet buried itself into the "tom-tom" with deadly force.

"Whoop!" yelled Tom-tom Tom, and he stopped playing instantly. "Hold on! I give in!" And he dropped his drum with wonderful haste. "Don't shoot no more!"

Having let go his instrument of torture, he beat a hasty retreat in the direction of the saloon, to the amusement of the citizens who were there to witness it. He could not stand that.

"You had better drop et," cried the man who had fired. "Ef ye touch et oncet more this

night I'll try a shot plump at yer headlight nose, and a feller couldn't miss et ef he tried. This thing has got ter be a degree tiresome, and I opine you hev worked yer snap to ther end."

"Verily, I wonder it has not come to this long before," observed Mr. Balaam. "It is to be hoped that will settle it for the night. What a victory for my cause, if I could only convert that fallen man from the evil of his ways, and make a sober man of him! Verily, that were a task worth living for. I'll try it; I'll begin upon him in the morning."

"Might jest as well try ter make ther water in ther creek thar run t'other way," one man remarked to that.

Mr. Balaam did not rejoin, but went on and disappeared.

Gradually, from that time, the lights went out one by one, and at last the camp was wrapped in darkness.

The hour was late when silent forms stole silently forth from the camp and made their way one by one up the gulch, moving like veritable shadows of the shadows which abounded.

Once they had entered the gulch, where the blackness was impenetrable, they were lost to sight altogether.

In the depth of a silent cavern a company of masked men was congregated, under the light of a single lamp suspended from above by a wire.

The face of every one was hid from view, and the general appearance of all was concealed beneath loose robes. Here a man might be in the presence of a friend and never know it.

All were sitting silent as we first look upon them, but presently entered another, when one from the group rose and spoke.

"Well, we are all here now," he said.

"Yes," said the late comer, looking around, "all here, and I was the last of the lot. Couldn't help that."

He sat down, and the first speaker continued:

"Scorpions of See-Saw, we are here on business, and that business is—to decide what is to be done with Deadwood Dick. In spite of our warning he is here, and declares his intention of remaining. What's to be done?"

"From what I have seen of him," said one, "I'd say let him stay. He'll never set the world afire with his smartness."

"He may be playing deeper than we think. He has a reputation, you must remember."

"I don't see how he ever got it."

"The question is, what is to be done with him here?"

"Let's talk it over and see what it is necessary to do. No need for us to get alarmed, I fancy."

"Still, it is better to nip his game at once, if we can find out what it is, than to give him the chance to get us on the hip; don't you think so?"

The man who had spoken first was evidently the leader of the band.

Said he now:

"Before we proceed further, let me urge, as usual, the necessity for being very guarded in what is said, so that it will be impossible for the identity of any of us to become known."

"Certainly."

"Not that any one is likely to overhear, but it is the old saying that walls have ears, and prevention is better than cure."

"Every time."

"So, let us be guarded, speaking in any manner of roundabout way, so long as we understand one another."

This was assented to.

"Now," continued the leader, "let me give you my impression of Deadwood Dick, for I have taken care to observe him well since he came here. I have paid attention to the conversation between him and Henry Hancock, and have sized the man up pretty well. Still, he may be deeper than I give him credit for."

"Yes, it won't do to take anything for granted, with him."

These two men had had the talk all to themselves, so far, but now another put in his oar.

"Et comes ter me," said he "that ther cuss has put ther halter on his own neck by comin' hyer so open and aboveboard."

"So he has, to a great extent," agreed the leader. "We know him, and he is unable to make a single move without our being well aware of it, and we can move to block him."

"Yas; an' ther mayor went fer him about that, too."

"So he did," said the leader. "He took him to do for it, and his points were good ones."

"What had ther detective ter say to et?"

"Said he knew what he was about, or words to that effect. But, I tell you his argument was thin."

"Then you did not think he was so very great?"

"My opinion of him is small. You see, it is one of two things: Either he has been overrated, or he is playing off with a purpose in view. It's one thing or the other, for it must be."

"And you are inclined to think he has been overrated?"

"I am."

"And so am I."

"Some of his talk with Hancock goes to prove it. The questions he asked were the same old questions the other detectives have asked. If anything, they were of less importance than some of the others."

"Then, as I said, what harm to leave him alone and let him do what he can? I am not greatly afraid of him for one."

"We have no need to be afraid of him, or of any one; our only object is, to keep him off the trail till we have taken Satan Sam. Don't you see? It's the Scorpions and the detective both against the outlaw, and the Scorpions and the detective pulling against each other. See?"

"Yes, I see; that was a slip. Well, what is to be done?"

"How will it do to take Deadwood Dick and make a prisoner of him till we are done?"

"That can be done, of course; but, is it necessary? Since we have a guard over him, what harm can he do? Besides, to make a prisoner of him we have to show our hand."

"Why not make a dead man of him and be done with it?" demanded one who had been silent all along.

"No, no," the leader objected, "no bloodshed if we can help it. That is bad business, and it's a big mark against a man if they happen to get hold of him. No, we must not do that, unless in a fight where it's his life or ours."

"That's sound sense," some of the others agreed.

"I propose this," said the leader: "That we allow him his liberty but keep him well under watch, and if we see anything suspicious about his movements, then take him and put him where he can't do harm."

"That will do."

"One thing is sure: if he does not do more than he has done already he is not going to be a very dangerous man to fight. I have seen detectives before, and some shrewd ones, too, and I am free to say that most all of them had the look of being a good deal smarter than Deadwood Dick."

"Let it be settled that way, then."

"Are all in favor?"

Every hand was raised in answer to the question.

"That business is settled, then," said the leader. "Now, I must call your attention to the fate of Bart Miller."

"That was awful business, captain."

"It was the fellow's own fault. I had had my suspicions of him for some time past, and knew our secrets were not safe with him. Let it be a lesson to you all, for I have means of knowing your movements when you least suspect they can be known. When the Scorpion sting is felt it means death."

"We know that."

"It may be necessary, hereafter, to call you together by some other signal than the old one. If so, you will have notice of the change. Now, our work of the hour is done. We are still to operate in secret; not a man of us must know anything of the Scorpions; we must work to capture Satan Sam; we must take a hand in things at See-Saw to keep the camp purified, you know. And then, we must have a watchful eye upon Deadwood Dick."

CHAPTER IX.

DEADWOOD DICK'S DEMAND.

ON the following morning See-Saw had cause for excitement.

A raid had been made by Satan Sam during the night, and no less than three places of business had been robbed.

First of these in importance was the mine office, where a quantity of money and bullion was on hand; the next was the office of a fellow who did something of a local banking business.

The third, yet the first to be discovered, was the safe at the hotel, where Proprietor Snicker-son Snooks and his guests were in the habit of putting their valuables for safe-keeping. And in each case a clean sweep had been made and everything of any value taken.

Nor was this all.

In each of the three places a notice had been left, the same in each case, reading like this:

"DEADWOOD DICK:—

"This is the way I greet you. I carry on my work right under your nose, and openly defy you. Now, what are you going to do about it? That is what the citizens of See-Saw will want to know."

"Defiantly yours,

"SATAN SAM."

When this was brought to the notice of Mayor Hancock he was wild.

He demanded to see Deadwood Dick in haste, and when the detective came down from his room he "jumped upon" him at once.

"See what has been going on while you slept!" he cried. "Here the rascal has dared to come here and make three robberies right under your eyes, so to say. Do you mean to allow this to go on?"

The detective took it quite coolly.

"You ought to have night watchmen, when you know there is danger," he said. "I could not prevent this any more than you could, being asleep."

"That's what was the trouble, you were asleep. You do not seem to be very wide awake yet. Do you think you can do anything to recover what has been taken and get hold of the thief?"

"Perhaps, if I can get hold of a clew—"

"A clew be danged! That is what all detectives preach; they must have a clew or they can't do anything. Why don't you find a clew?"

"I have not yet looked for one, sir."

"Then it's time you did."

"Mr. Hancock—"

"Well?"

"Just keep in mind the fact that I am not an employee of yours, but an independent detective. If you are not satisfied with the way I do my work just say so and I'll—"

"Drop out, hey? That would be an easy way out of an unpleasant thing where success seems dubious."

"I had not said so. I was going to say—I'll let you attend to it in your own way and I'll attend to it in my way. Then there'll be no reason for any quarrel."

"Well, you seem to forget, sir, that you are in my employ in this matter, and that I have the right to expect something of you. Now, I ask again what are you going to do?"

"I'm going to tell you, first, that Deadwood Dick enters the employ of no one. I am an independent or nothing."

"Well, calling you that, what are you going to do?"

"Well, I am going to demand the co-operation of the Scorpions of See-Saw. It is understood that they are on the side of justice, and there is no good reason why we should not work together."

"How are you going to reach them, not knowing who they are?"

"The same as Satan Sam has just reached me, by putting up notices where they can be seen."

"Well, I wish you luck, that is all."

"And at the same time you doubt my meeting with any success."

"Yes, and very much, too. I have tried to gain the confidence of these men, but it seems all to no purpose. It can't be done."

"Have you tried it this way?"

"Well, no."

"Then you won't stand in the way of my trying it?"

"Why, certainly not; do anything you please; but, Bristol, I tell you it is exasperating to have such a thing as this happen when I hoped by your help to bring the outlaw to terms in no time."

"Well, I'll write out a notice or two, and then we'll go and take a look around for a clew."

The detective turned to the bar to do the writing, and the mine-manager followed him with his eyes, smiling in a way that bespoke the little confidence he had in Deadwood Dick.

The detective was busy for some moments, and when he had done he posted one of the notices up there in the bar-room.

It was worded this way:

"TO THE SCORPIONS OF SEE-SAW:—

"If you are honest men, as you claim to be, here is a reasonable demand. I want you to admit me into your circle, so that we may work together in the hunting down of Satan Sam. There is no good reason for your refusal, and if you do refuse it will be taken as evidence that you are not what you claim to be, but really no better than the outlaw himself. I await forty-eight hours for your decision."

DEADWOOD DICK, JR."

"There," he observed, as he turned away, "we'll see what that will do in the way of making a start against Satan Sam."

The mine-manager was smiling still.

"I hope it will prove useful to you," he said, "but from what I have seen of the work of the Scorpions, Mr. Bristol, I think they will merely laugh at your demand and bid you find them out if you can."

"What's this? What's this? What's this I hear?"

So cried Barnabas Balaam, as he came bounding into the room from the hall.

He was wild-eyed and excited, and he spoke rapidly and with the greatest amount of much ado in his manner.

"They tell me the safe has been robbed," he cried. "Is it so? Tell me, my friends, is it really so? Lucky for me I didn't deposit my pocketbook there last night, mighty lucky."

Here was a howl of laughter.

From the man's manner, all who heard him supposed he had left his money in the keeping of the landlord.

"Why, you infernal idiot," cried the mayor, "if your money is safe what need have you to halloo so about it? You make as much fuss as you could make if you had lost a fortune."

"It was the narrow escape that excited me, sir," was the response. "But, is it really true that this outlaw, Satan Sam, has been here again to despoil you? Mr. Bristol, I take it the camp looks to you to do something now, if you ever did. But, this is not in my line."

"Shall we go and look at the places which have been robbed?" the detective asked of Hancock.

"Certainly, if you think it's any use."

"I want to look around."

"Very well, you may as well begin right here where the safe has been robbed, for this is one, if you haven't forgotten."

"I have already looked here, sir."

The man looked at him in some surprise.

"I haven't seen you near the safe," he said.

"That does not signify. Come on and we'll visit the other places."

It was plain to any thoughtful observer that the mayor had secretly a more favorable respect for Deadwood Dick's ability.

He had been with him every moment since he had come into the room, but he had not seen him so much as look toward the safe, yet here he declared he had made an examination there.

"I s'pose it's no use fer an outsider ter ask to come along, is it?" asked Mr. Balaam, dropping partly into his occasional dialect manner of speaking.

"You are welcome to go, sir, for what I care," was the detective's response. "I do not care how many come along."

"Howlin' Hiram! I must drop back to early trainin' and so express myself, but you ar' a caution, Mr. Bristol. Here the men of See-Saw thought you was no good, but I told 'em to give ye a chance. I'm betting on you, sir."

"Don't bet too heavily, that's all, or you may lose your money, my friend."

"If I had plenty I'd bet it all, sir. Pilgrims from yan! but you have a way of doin' things that gits me, and I reckon to opine that it gits the boss too. I mean the way you grasp things."

"You may know what you mean, but I certainly do not, sir. Come Mr. Hancock, and we will go."

Hancock led the way, and he and the detective set forth.

"I'll bet that fellow is a deep one," said Balaam, to the crowd, when they had gone.

"You think so?" queried the landlord.

"I do, sir. See the way he took note of that robbed safe, yet he didn't go near it, and didn't seem to look at it, either. Don't that tally with what we have heard about him?"

"It 'pears to, that's the fact."

"Of course it does. I only wish my time was my own, I'd like no better fun than to follow him around and see him work up this case. But, my time is not my own, and I can't take it."

"Most of us could spare ye, I reckon," observed one old fellow whose appearance bespoke a hard drinker.

"And it's a sure thing that Tom-tom could spare ye," put in another.

"Wonder ef he will pound ther tom-tom any more?" questioned yet another. "I would drop et, ef I was him, now."

"He's byer to answer fer himself," the bummer cried, at that moment coming in. "I think I'll have ter get onto a new snap," he said. "Bullets is too harsh for my narves."

"Better, my man, to leave the drink alone altogether," said the temperance advocate. "Why not join my standard and be a temperance man? Look at my appearance, sir, and then look at your own, and reason the matter carefully."

This comparison raised a laugh, for, truth to

tell, except for the appearance of face, one was about as hard-looking as the other.

"Well," said Mr. Balaam, "no more for the present. I'm going to follow up that detective and see what he does. But, by and by I'll be here on the Square to deliver my lecture, and I hope to have a good big audience."

With a wave of the hand he was gone, leaving the crowd to make such remarks about him as they were pleased to make. He was a man with a mission, and remarks did not do him much harm. They rolled off, apparently, like water from a duck's back.

CHAPTER X.

THE WOMAN IN THE CASE.

MAYOR HANCROFT and his detective, in whom, apparently, he had no great store of confidence, had gone off to the building where the local banking business was carried on, followed by quite a number of idlers.

Barnabas Balaam now bent his steps in the same direction, and entered the little office not a great while after the others.

This office was run by one Timothy Weeds.

He was a man past the middle age, and one given to looking upon the dark side of everything.

And on this occasion the side he saw was dark indeed, for he had been robbed of his last dollar, almost, and his business was a wreck. No wonder he was weeping in a corner.

Timothy Weeds was a man who could not stand trouble philosophically like some. He was broken utterly, now.

"Why, old man, not giving way like this!" cried the mayor, on entering.

"How can I help it?" the spare and trembling man responded. "I am despoiled of everything, and my heart is broken."

"Tut! tut! It may not be half so bad as that, sir. Here is the great detective, Deadwood Dick; he may be able to help us out and recover your fortune for you. At any rate he is going to try it."

"I wouldn't care so much for myself," the man muttered, "but Tessie—I tremble for Tessie. What will the poor child do now?"

"Don't worry about your daughter, sir; this camp will take care of her."

"What can the camp do to repair my loss?" the old man wailed. "I ventured my all here, to make a fortune, and I would have done it only for this robbery. Oh! my curse upon Satan Sam!"

"We're bound to get him, sooner or later, and then we'll repay him for this. Cheer up, Weeds. There is a bright lining to every cloud."

"I'd like to see it. It's dark enough now. My money all gone, and nothing but toil the prospect for my daughter when I am dead. It was the hope of my life to gather a fortune for her. And I had nearly done it, too. One year more and we could have gone away independent."

"Don't take on like a baby, old man," the mayor encouraged. "I tell you we are going to see you through. Cheer up, now, and let Mr. Bristol take a look around your place."

At that moment a young woman, radiant with health and beauty, came hastily into the room, her face all aglow, but at sight of the crowd she grew pale, and laid her hand upon a chair for support.

"What—what is it?" she gasped.

"Don't—don't tell her yet," cried the old man, in a low tone.

His tone, however, was not low enough to prevent the words from reaching the young woman's ears.

"Dear papa!" cried the girl, and she sprang forward and placed her arms around him, as if to protect him from—she knew not what.

The girl was young, not over nineteen, and as she looked around upon the faces about her it was seen how lovely she really was. As the detective looked upon her, and their eyes met, warm blood mounted to his face in spite of himself.

Whether the girl noticed this at first or not, was uncertain, but soon her eyes returned to him, and her own face recovered some of its lost color.

"What is it, gentlemen?" she asked. "What has papa done, that you are all here? I know he has done nothing wrong."

"Of course he hasn't, Miss Weeds," hastened the mayor. "A great wrong has been done to him, though, and that is the reason we are here."

"A wrong to him? What is it?"

"He has been robbed. There, Weeds, it's better to let her know the truth than to keep her worrying about it."

"Is that all?" cried the girl, her face brighten-

ing. "I feared it must be something terrible. What do we care for that, papa? I still have you and you have me, and I am young and strong, you know."

"Ah! child, you do not know what the loss means," the father sighed. "This money was to have bought you education, and ease, and comforts, and all that; now, what is before you?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" the girl merrily laughed. "You set more store by the money than I ever did, papa. It has been a great deal of trouble to you. Now that it is gone we'll be happy with just what we have and not trouble ourselves about anything else."

The father shook his head, and a heavy sigh escaped him.

"That's the right kind of stuff, young woman, if you will allow me to speak up and say so," cried out Mr. Balaam. "You are of the right sort, and you are as rich as you can be. With good health and a spirit like that, you are superior to everything. Would that the cause of temperance had a few like you to back it."

The mine-owner turned upon the crank with a scowl.

"Can't you stop harping on that string for one minute?" he cried. "If you can't you had better be getting out, for most of us are sick of it."

"I have said my say," responded the temperance advocate. "You can't deny that I had good cause for admiration here."

"No; but you had no cause to wring in temperance in connection."

"Well, I'm done."

"That being so, Mr. Bristol, suppose you now give attention to the business which brought us here, to see if you cannot discover some clew to this rascally work, something that will put us on the trail of Satan Sam."

"I have already done so, sir," was the detective's response.

"You have done so?"

"Yes."

"Why, man, you have not moved out of your tracks since you stopped where you stand now when we first came in."

The detective smiled.

"That is not saying that I have not made use of my eyes, sir," he rejoined. "There is no clew to be picked up here."

The mayor looked at the detective in undisguised astonishment.

"Well, if this is the way you do your work," he said, "you are something of a curiosity, to say the least. What do you expect to find in the way of clew, anyhow? Do you look for a lock of hair? a button? a lost finger?"

At that the detective only quietly smiled.

"Such things are found in romance, sir, and occasionally something of the sort turns up in actual practice; but it happens too rarely to be depended upon. I have been looking for nothing of the kind. When this case is done you will be able to understand anything that may seem mysterious now."

The mayor bent his gaze upon him searchingly, at that, but if he hoped to read anything in that face he hoped in vain.

"Just what I said at first," spoke out Mr. Balaam. "Give the young man a chance to show what he can do before ye condemn him. Seems ter me et looks as if he knows what he is about."

"And if you don't mind your own business, and stop meddling," cried the mayor, "I'll attend to seeing that you are escorted out of town."

"That settles et, boss; you won't have to speak to me again."

So saying, the temperance advocate drew back and held his peace, merely observing what was done and said by the others.

Miss Weeds was trying to comfort her father, while the others around were gaping idly about the room as if in hopes of discovering something which the detective might have overlooked.

"Well, if you are done here, then, Bristol, we may as well go to the mine-office and see what is to be discovered there."

"Yes, let's go there, though I don't expect much will come of it. Such a man as this Satan Sam is said to be is not going to leave tell-tale clews lying around if he knows it."

"I believe you are right in saying that. But, come on."

They passed out and set off in the direction of the mine-office, the idlers following them, Mr. Balaam among the rest.

"Mr. Weeds seems to take it quite to heart," the detective remarked as they went along.

"Yes, so he does, and he's not to be blamed for that. He's a soft-hearted man, and his whole life is for his daughter. As you heard

him say, he was working only to store up a fortune for her."

"For which she seems to care little—for money, I mean."

"Exactly. A queer girl is Tessie Weeds, and no mistake. She does not seem to be built on the usual plan."

"How's that?"

"Doesn't seem to have any heart."

"No heart! Why, man, I'd call her all heart, the way she soothed her poor father."

"That isn't just what I mean. I mean feeling. Any number of good fellows here have tried to make love to her, but she spurns them all."

"That's all right; there may be a lover in the background somewhere, you know."

"I don't know—rather, I mean to say, I do know; her father has told me that she is as free as a bird. That she has always been as careless about lovers. Does not seem to have any of the womanly passion in her make-up."

"You can't make me believe that, sir. My guess is the right one, or—"

"Or, what?"

"The right fellow has not come along yet."

"That may be so. Anyhow, this camp must not let her suffer, no matter what comes to the old man."

"If your camp would see to that, that she does not suffer, you must give all your care to the old man, then," the detective expressed opinion.

"Why so?"

"Can't you see that her whole concern is for him?"

"Well, I don't know but that you are right. I'll take that into consideration."

"You are a single man, I take it, Mr. Hancroft."

"Yes, fortunately."

"Ha! that word confirms my suspicion, sir."

"What suspicion?"

"That you are one of the suitors for her hand. There, there, it is no affair of mine of course; no offense meant."

"No, I should rather say it is no affair of yours, sir, and the least said about it the better. I was glad for one thing, anyhow, if report be true."

"And what is that, if I may ask?"

"That you are a married man yourself. You brought more color to her face when her eyes met yours, Deadwood Dick, than any other man has ever been able to bring there. I say it again, it's lucky you are a married man—lucky for me."

CHAPTER XI.

MAKING A PROPOSITION.

THE detective laughed lightly over the matter in which Mr. Hancroft was apparently so keenly interested, and they went on and entered the mine office.

Their conversation had been in low tones, so that no one of the idlers who followed them could overhear, and as they entered the office it was dropped altogether. In fact, its purpose had been carried.

And that purpose?

The detective was not slow to read it. He had noticed the flush upon the girl's face when his eyes met hers, though he had not given it the same interpretation Mr. Hancroft had given it. Now, however, he saw there might be ground for the suspicion.

And that being so—Well, Hancroft had been quick to make him aware that he knew Deadwood Dick to be a married man, and the hidden insinuation was that he would take care to have the young lady informed of the fact as soon as possible.

At the mine-office there was nothing to be discovered more than had been found at the other places.

The detective looked around a little more closely, as it seemed to the mine manager, and certainly more to his liking, but there was no clew to be picked up, as had been foreseen.

The idlers watched the detective's movements with interest.

Since his coming there, many of his most daring exploits had been related by one and another, and he was looked upon as something of a demigod.

And it was plain that there was disappointment found with his admirers, for he was not the Deadwood Dick of their imaginings. There was lacking all that snap, that "get-up-and-git" quality, with which they had dressed their hero in their minds. They were not pleased.

Nor did they hesitate about expressing themselves upon that point, when the detective had taken himself back to the hotel.

"Et don't seem possible he could git up and howl like they say," one fellow observed. "He seems as mild as milk an' water."

"Tigers have soft paws when they hold their nails in," another reminded. "I reckon detectives ar' built much on ther same plan. This feller's paws seem soft as silk, though."

"You ar' right."

"What do you think about et, stranger?"

This to Mr. Balaam, as they were all strolling back in the direction of the hotel.

"It doesn't interest me wonderfully much," was the response. "What I say is, give the young man a chance. I believe in giving everybody a chance. But, temperance must now claim my sole attention."

So, for the time being, the matter ended.

When they reached the hotel the detective had taken a seat on the piazza, where he appeared as unconcerned as though he had no business on hand.

The mayor had not returned to the hotel, but had stopped again at the office of the despoiled banker, where he found the father and daughter alone, the fair girl still endeavoring to reconcile him to his loss.

Hancroft closed the door as he entered.

"This is really too bad, Weeds," he said, "but still it might be worse. You and your daughter have each other yet."

"Just what I tell him," cried Tessie. "And what need we care for the money? I have youth and health, and he has my love and help. What more does either of us need, I should like to know?"

"She don't understand, she don't understand," sighed Timothy. "Money is the only thing worth living for in this world. If you have got money you have got all the rest."

"You think too much of money, papa," the girl chided. "Now that it is gone we will let it go and think more of each other. That will be better, you know it will. No more worry, so long as we have plenty to eat and a little to wear. That's all the very richest of them can have anyway."

"That is so," agreed Mr. Hancroft. "But, my friends, let me suggest a way out of all this trouble."

"What is it?" asked Timothy.

"I have spoken of it before, but now I feel that I may speak of it again and with more show of success. Miss Tessie, you know that I love you, for I have told you so."

"And I have told you that I could not help it if you did," answered the girl, provokingly.

"You have told me you could not love me in return, but that is all right. I do not look for it right away. You are young, and the love will come fast enough when you come to know me better."

"I don't believe it, Mr. Hancroft. I have tried to love, lots and lots of times, but I have never got any further than papa here, whom I love dearly. I don't believe I'll ever love anybody else. I know what you are going to say next, but it's no use. My answer is no."

Hancroft had before asked for her hand in marriage, as can be guessed, and the answer had been the same then. The girl knew what to look for now.

"You do not know all I am going to say," declared Hancroft. "Let me talk to your father for a moment now."

"If you want to."

"And I do. Timothy Weeds?"

"Yes, sir."

"If you will induce this heartless daughter of yours to marry me, I will make good to you every dollar you have lost by this robbery, sir."

Mr. Weeds roused up eagerly.

"Haven't I tried it?" he declared. "When you offered before I talked with her about it, but she said she didn't love you, and that settled it. I'm willin' she should do it, but she won't."

"And what has love to do with it, so long as there is love enough on one side? I love her enough for both of us. Now, Tessie, see here."

"What is it?"

"Do you really love your father?"

"Of course I do, sir. If I loved you half as well I'd marry you quick."

"Then, if you love him, will you not make him happy? You can make him doubly happy if you will only marry me."

"But, you wouldn't be happy, and I'm sure I wouldn't, sir."

"I not be happy! I'd be the happiest man you ever heard of. And after a little you would be happy, too."

"It is no use, Mr. Hancroft. I remember the advice my mother gave me when she died, and I'm going to follow it to the letter, for I could trust her in everything."

"And what was her advice?"

"Not to marry unless I loved truly and well, no matter if I never married at all."

"Then, Tessie, see here: It is about time you made up your mind to love me, for I am certainly going to marry you one of these days. Don't shy off, now, for I mean it."

"Maybe you will."

"Oh! I know I will, for you will soon come to love me a little, I am sure. And now, Timothy, to you: As soon as Tessie will marry me I'll make good your loss, so do the best you can for me with the heartless little witch. I know you are willing, and it only rests with our little lady."

"You might look further and fare worse, Tessie, girl," said Timothy, in an argumentative way.

"I suppose so, papa, but I don't love Mr. Hancroft, and that settles the whole business for the present. I wish I did, for your sake."

"Well, well, take your time to think it over," said Hancroft, turning toward the door. "But, Tessie, don't let anybody else get in, ahead of me. Remember, I have the first bid."

"Not much danger, sir."

"I don't know; there are good-looking strangers about camp. By the way, don't go and set your cap for that detective of mine, for he is a married man. I merely mention this by the way."

Mentioned it by the way, did he? It was second only in importance to the proposition he had made, and was one of the chief reasons for his having dropped in as he had done.

And, as he made known the fact that Deadwood Dick was a man of family, he watched to see what the effect would be.

What he saw angered him not a little. The girl's face grew pale for one single second, when the next moment it was burning red, and she turned away to hide her confusion.

"Curse the luck!" the man growled, as he left the room. "Here she has been proof against everything and everybody all along, only to have her foolish little heart waken at the sight of that fellow's good-looking face. Lucky for him he is married, for if he wasn't—"

A grim look finished it.

He went to the hotel, where he found his detective on the piazza taking things in a very easy manner.

"Well, I suppose you have been thinking it over," he spoke, on coming up.

He helped himself to a chair.

"Yes, I have been giving it a little thought," was the response.

"Well, what's the result?"

"Nothing."

"Confound it, but you are enough to exasperate a saint! Do you mean to say you haven't a single idea or a single point to work on?"

"That's about the way it stands, sir. I suppose we'll go out there and take a look at that lake as soon as we have breakfasted, eh? Breakfast must be about ready now."

"Yes, we'll go out there, if you think it will do any good. The others went, but it amounted to nothing."

"Their going does not answer for me. I must see a thing with my own eyes to understand it aright. Ha! here is the breakfast gong. Let's attend to that pleasant duty."

The boarders filed in, among them Barnabas Balaam.

He got to the table with a skip and a jump, and made sure of a place where he had command of the array of dishes in every direction.

"Never get left, is my motto," he declared. "I have had experience in this line, and I have found it's first come best served, most always, so I'm generally with the first. Anchor yourselves, gentlemen."

He was again opposite Mayor Hancroft and his companion, the detective, and paid attention to what they said, now and again putting in a word himself.

He was a character, this same Balaam, and some there were who were ready to agree with Tom-tom in the remark he had made about the mule in the stable being Balaam.

CHAPTER XII.

AN AMAZING CONFESSION.

"Verily, verily, verily!" exclaimed Barnabas, when he appeared upon the piazza after breakfast was over. "If I hadn't been born a temperance soldier I do believe I should turn detective."

"Ha! ha! haw!" the laugh which greeted that. "What could you do as a detective. You'd make a better stove-blacker's helper."

"Maybe I would, but after listening to the

conversation I have just heard between your mayor and Deadwood Dick, I am all on fire to see that wonderful lake that a man don't drown in. If they don't forbid, I believe I'll accompany them there."

A good many of the crowd were of the same intention, so nothing was raised against that.

"But," said one man, "what about the temperance lecture? Ther cause will suffer while you're gone, ye know."

"I know, I know, but I'll fight all the harder to make up for it when I come back. Oh! I must see that wonderful lake, you know, for nothing delights me so much as water—water first, last, and all the time!"

The matter had been talked over at length at the table, as may be understood from this.

It was a puzzle to understand how the outlaw, leaping into the lake as he was said to have done, and not reappearing, came out alive.

And, as Mayor Hancroft and the detective talked these things over at length, the curiosity of all hearers was aroused, and no wonder Barnabas Balaam desired to accompany them out to the wonderful sheet.

When they appeared upon the piazza he promptly accosted them.

"I say, gentlemen," said he, "would you like to make the heart of a poor man glad?"

"How can we do that?" queried the detective.

"I'll tell you, sir. You are going out to that lake, and after all I have heard said of it I am filled to the chin with curiosity to see it, too. Will you allow me to go along with you on my mule Spavins?"

"Why, you are welcome to go, as far as I am concerned," was the assurance. "I have no objections."

"May heaven bless thee, and may the cause of temperance never wane!" cried the gladdened Balaam.

"What has this got to do with temperance?" asked the mayor.

"It has to do with me, sir, and I have to do with temperance," was the explanation offered.

The mayor ordered horses for himself and the detective, and Balaam saw to getting out his mule, while many others busied themselves in making ready for the little excursion.

Finally they were ready and set forth.

The mayor and the detective rode ahead, Barnabas Balaam following on his mule, and the others coming on after him.

It was a rugged trail, a part of the way, but finally they reached their destination all in good order, and there was the lake spread out at their feet as they halted upon a ledge from which the outlaw was said to have leaped.

This ledge was a dozen or fifteen feet above the water, and represented what may be termed a promontory, a high cape, and it projected to a point near what would have been the middle of the lake had it been round.

"There," said the mayor, pointing, "s where the fellow disappeared, as near as I can locate."

"Yes, that's about ther spot," others supported.

"You say he dived in?"

"Straight in."

"And was seen no more."

"Not a sign of him, though the men waited here half an hour or more."

Mr. Bristol had dismounted and stepped to the edge to look over. He saw the face of the cliff was a sheer descent, and the whole line of the lake's coast was visible from this point.

"It is very strange," he had to confess.

"So everybody agrees," was the response from the mayor.

The detective walked along the edge of the cliff, taking a critical survey of everything.

The others had remained mounted, looking from where they sat, most of them looking only at the detective to note his every movement.

Barnabas Balaam, seated on his mule in a stolid way, looked around at everything but apparently without the least idea of trying to solve the mystery which had brought them there.

Finally the detective returned to the horse, shaking his head.

"Do you give it up?" inquired the mayor.

"Yes, for the present, I do," was the answer. "It gets ahead of me completely, sir."

"Humph!"

"It would get ahead of any one," declared Mr. Balaam. "If that man jumped in there in the manner you say, he is in there yet. That is the long and the short of the whole mystery, gentlemen."

"Not so," corrected the mayor, "for he has been seen many times since, and has been up to some of his old evil tricks."

"Can't help it, sir, he is in the lake yet."

Maybe it was the man who was killed last night who has been playing his part since he was drowned."

"Heavens! what a thick head you have, sir!" the mayor cried. "It was only last night that the three robberies were committed at the camp. Where are your wits, if you ever had any?"

At that Mr. Balaam rubbed his chin in a reflective way.

"Then I don't understand it," he confessed. "If he is in the lake yet, he surely must be drowned; and if he isn't in the lake, then he must be a double being. Hal have I not hit it? Is he not both dead and alive at the same time? Study on that, my friends."

His extreme simplicity excited laughter, and he looked from face to face as if to discover what they were laughing about.

He was a character, this same Balaam. We have said so before. And, there was something more about him than appeared on the surface. His manner of speech seemed to change with his every change of mood.

"You had better give up their idea of becoming a detective," said one man. "I guess temperance fits you a good deal better, and even that is several sizes too big for ye."

"Oh! I don't know," remarked Mayor Hancroft, partly aside, "there seems to be plenty of room vacant on the detective ladder, and not very high up, either. Don't let them dissuade you from it, my friend. There is always room for talent in every profession. Eh, Bristol?"

"Assuredly," answered the detective, soberly. He appeared thoughtful, the detective, and nothing was said for some moments that might divert his thoughts.

Finally he came out of his reverie with a shake of the head, and mounting his horse he turned his back upon the lake and signified his readiness to return to the camp.

"Well, what has the visit shown you?" asked the mayor.

"It has shown me that this case is deeper than I had any idea I should find it," was the response.

"Is it too deep for you, sir?"

"It may prove so, but I do not give it up yet."

"What will be your next move?"

"I shall now wait to hear from the Scorpions, in response to my demand."

The mayor smiled in an amused way, if not indeed in a half-pitying manner. His opinion of Deadwood Dick could be read in his face.

If the detective noticed aught of this he did not appear to do so, but rode back to camp in what appeared to be a thoughtful mood. It did not seem that he was doing anything worthy of his reputation here.

Upon reaching the hotel he found a caller there awaiting him.

He was much surprised to see her, for it was no other than Tessie Weeds, the daughter of the banker.

The girl seemed to be a little nervous in manner, but she was outspoken in what she had to say, as the detective soon discovered, to his amazement.

"I want to speak with you in private, Mr. Bristol," she announced.

"Well, this sitting-room is about as private a place as I can offer you," she was answered. "If we talk in low tones we shall not be overheard."

"I want to ask you if there is any hope that papa's fortune will be recovered. Do you think so?"

"I will tell you privately, Miss Weeds, that I think there is strong hope just now," was the reply.

What would Mayor Hancroft have thought of that?

"I am glad to hear you say it, sir, and I believe in you. I will not ask you what your hopes are based on; I will take you at your word. Now, will you answer another question truthfully?"

"I will answer it truthfully or not at all."

"Oh! I know I can trust you. Tell me, are you a married man?"

The detective hesitated, and a puzzled expression came upon his face. And little wonder.

"Why do you ask that?" he inquired.

"For a very personal reason, sir," was the response.

"Well, I promised to answer you truthfully or not at all. I am not married, Miss Weeds."

"I believe you, sir. Mr. Hancroft said you were, but I would not believe him on his oath. I mistrust him greatly."

"Now, tell me why you are interested," the detective requested.

"I am interested because I—because I—love you," came the answer, and as the confession came from her lips her words sunk to a whisper and her eyes sought the floor, while the hot blood mounted to her cheeks and made her pretty face rosy red.

The detective was for a moment speechless.

"You love me?" he finally managed to utter.

"Yes, I love you."

She now raised her earnest eyes to his, and he saw in their clear depths how thoroughly in earnest she was.

Once before he had felt his blood quicken at sight of this handsome child-woman, and now his pulses tingle and his breath came as if by quickened gasps.

"Let us sit down here," he said. "This matter may be a serious one for both of us, and we must, at least, have it out here and now. We must have a thorough understanding. I know you are deeply in earnest in what you have said."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SECRET ENGAGEMENT.

It was a serious moment and an exciting one.

The young girl's fingers twitched nervously as she toyed with a corner of her neat jacket, and the detective showed more nervousness than was to be looked for in Deadwood Dick.

"What has led you to make such a confession as this to me?" the detective asked, when they had taken seats.

"My heart," was the prompt response. "And, oh! Mr. Bristol, you can do me a great favor if you only will, whether you care for me in return or not. Will you do it?"

"What is the favor?"

"My papa is urging me to marry Mr. Hancroft, and I detest the man. Can't you hurry up and restore papa's money so there will no longer be *that* reason why I should marry him?"

"If you do marry him, will that restore what your father has lost?"

"Yes; I have not told you about that. He has promised that if I will marry him he will make good all papa has lost. But, I cannot do it—I will not do it. You can help me if you will, I know you can."

"You seem to have great confidence in me."

"Yes, I have. I am sure you know more about this thing than you let folks find out."

"I am glad for your good opinion of me, anyhow. But, it is impossible for me to restore the stolen money at once. I'll tell you what I could do, however."

"What is that?"

"If you know how much your father's loss is I can lend you the amount until the stolen money is recovered. Will that serve your purpose as well?"

"I do not know about that," was the frank response. "After the humiliating confession I have just made to you, Mr. Bristol, it would not be proper for me to accept it that way."

"It is, unfortunately, the only way I can help you at once. But, Miss Weeds, let me hear your story. Seems to me you must have more to tell me."

"What do you mean?"

"Well, you have come to me with a wonderfully strange confession for a girl to make. What has brought it about?"

"Love at first sight, sir," was the frank but blushing answer.

"Well, well, but this is refreshing!" the detective exclaimed, and he laughed lightly. "Do not imagine for a moment that I am making fun," he hastened to say; "the oddity of it strikes me, that is all."

"It is unusual, isn't it?"

"Well, it is, rather. How in the world came it about?"

"I shall not answer till I have asked another question and had an answer to that, sir."

"Very well, ask your question, then."

"You have told me you are a single man."

"So I am; that is the truth."

"And free to marry?"

"Certainly."

"Then, do you think you could love me a little, just enough to make me your wife and give me a chance to make you happy?"

This fairly took away the young man's breath, and he rose and paced the floor, to keep his excitement within bounds.

"This beats all I ever heard of," he said.

"Miss Weeds, you are as frank and open as the broad daylight, and I cannot doubt your earnestness in this matter. I certainly hope you are in earnest, anyhow."

"Then you do—you think you can—"

She was trying to get at the question, eagerly, gladly.

"I know I can," was the assurance. "The first sight I had of you my heart went out to you, and now I love you madly. This is the solemn truth. It has been, as you called it, love at first sight."

"Oh! I am so glad!" the girl cried, rising and taking his hand. "I know we shall be happy. But, I have done more than my part, and now I leave you to do the rest. You will think I am too awfully bold for anything, won't you?"

"I believe you are as pure as the purest wild flower that grows in this valley, Tessie."

"Ask my father, if you doubt it," was the response. "Ask anybody and everybody who knows me. I defy them to say one word to my discredit. The worst I have ever been guilty of in my life is what I have been guilty of within these few minutes."

"I believe you, Tessie. But, your story. You have one to tell, I know. I never heard of a girl's taking the step you have taken. It is something new, decidedly, is it not?"

"Perhaps so, and I suppose it is; but, why should not woman have the same right as man, where such vital matters are at stake?"

"I see no reason, Tessie, except that it looks out of place to see a woman making the first advances in a love affair."

"Then you condemn me for what I have done?"

"Decidedly not. You had more courage than I, it seems. It is only because it is so unusual, so surprising, that it claims notice. But, your story, your story; for you have hinted that you have one to tell."

"I will tell it now. It is only a simple one, but it will account for all that may seem strange and out of place in my conduct. In doing what I have done I was only following the advice of my dead mother. That sounds very strange to you, no doubt."

"Well, yes, it does."

"My mother was not happily married. She did not marry the man she loved. Papa was good to her, they lived as happy as married folks usually do, I suppose, but my mother's heart had been given to another, and she never saw the object of her affections but once, and then only for a moment. She did not know his name."

"That is strange enough, truly. It sounds like fiction—like the unique plot of some love romance."

"I believe there are stranger things in real life, Mr. Bristol, than were ever dreamed out by our story-tellers. But, let me go on. My mother always believed that her experience would some day be mine; that is, that I should some time meet the man whom I would love madly at first sight, and she always warned me not to let the opportunity pass if the experience ever came. She warned me that it would haunt me all my days if I did."

"And the experience has come?"

"As you know. I am going to be perfectly frank with you, Mr. Bristol. The moment my eyes met yours my whole soul went out to you, and I loved you madly, devotedly. Then, for the first time, I was able to appreciate the heart-bunger which my poor mother suffered all her days. Mind, not a word of all this so that papa can learn of it; he never knew—never could suspect."

"I understand."

"And that is all. I have never felt the least regard for any man, though I have been sought by many, until I saw you. Then you know what happened. I have not disregarded my mother's warning. Now, my future is with you. What do you think of me anyhow?"

This wild flower's innocence was charming.

"I have already told you what I think of you," was the response. "I love you. I think we understand each other fully, Tessie. You will marry me, of course, as soon as my business here is done?"

"Whenever you desire it."

"Was there ever a courtship so strange!" the detective exclaimed. "Little did I dream, when I came here, that here I should meet my fate."

"I only hope we are making no mistake," said the child-woman. "Now, that is all, and I will return to papa. But, Mr. Bristol, what do you suppose Mr. Hancroft's idea was in telling papa and me you were married?"

"Perhaps he foresaw that something like this might happen."

"That must have been his reason, I suppose. But, Dick—may I call you by that name?—I must tell you that I am afraid of Hancroft, and I

want you to protect me against him. Will you do that?"

"Yes."

"He thinks he is sure of me now, since he is able to offer papa help in money matters. What should I do? Ought I tell him I am engaged to you?"

"I would keep that a secret yet, Tessie. Tell your father, but no other. And in regard to money, I can repair your father's loss, if that is so important to him. You may tell him so."

"I will. Are you sure you love me Dick?"

"Don't you suppose I know whether I do or not, little one?"

There, in the privacy of the sitting-room, the lovers exchanged their first kisses, after which Tessie hastened away with her face all aglow and a new light burning in her peerless eyes.

The detective walked the floor for some minutes after she had gone, as if unable to believe he had not been dreaming.

"This beats any experience I ever had," he said to himself. "The little thing is as fresh and innocent as she is pretty, no doubting that. And she has heard that I am married, eh?"

A cloud came over his face for a moment.

"That is awkward," he said. "Trouble may grow out of it, if I am not careful. I love the girl, and must have her, but— Well, I must take care, that is all. I shall be glad when this case comes to an ending, now."

After awhile he went out to the piazza, where he took his usual seat and idled the time away.

Meanwhile, going straight home, Tessie said to her father:

"Papa, I am ready to give you my answer now."

Timothy looked up, and seeing the glowing face of his daughter, quickly exclaimed:

"Then you have made up your mind to Mr. Hancock?"

"I have made up my mind fully never to marry him, papa. There, do not look so angry. You know you cannot change me when once I say my mind is fully made up. The truth is, I am engaged to somebody else."

"Engaged?"

"Yes, papa, and to the first and only man I ever loved."

"And who is it? How long have you been keeping this matter from me, my child?"

"Not very long, papa. It is Mr. Bristol, the detective. I love him truly, and have promised to marry him. It was love at first sight with both of us. Now, now, do not scold me, for that will not do a bit of good. It is just as I tell you."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DETECTIVE ORDERED AWAY.

THERE was little danger that Pater Weeds would scold, for he could not recover himself sufficiently to say anything.

Never was there a fond father more dismayed. He listened in silence to all his daughter had to say, and it was a considerable time before he could give vent to his feelings.

When, finally, he could speak, a furious storm broke suddenly. Tessie had never before seen her father in such a passion, and when he expressed himself forcibly she could see where she had come by her own firmness of will. Timothy asserted his authority to the full.

"The knave!" he cried. "I happen to know he is a married man. I have seen mention of his wife in the papers. And to think that child of mine should engage herself to any one on such short acquaintance! It is not to be believed. But, I'll attend to this business for you. This is the first time I have had occasion to be severe with you."

To quote them were needless. The girl cried and begged, defending her act with every argument in her power except telling the whole truth, but Timothy was as firm as a rock.

He knew what was best for her, he declared. He knew the detective was a married man, and he would make him repent his treachery. And so, using force as well as authority, he took the girl and locked her in a room, after which he set out to find Hancock.

Here was the beginning of a ruction such as See-Saw had never witnessed.

It was an hour later when Hancock joined the detective on the hotel piazza. This was after Timothy had seen him and told him all about the man's treachery.

Bristol noted at once there was something cool about the man's manner as he came up, and like a flash he guessed what was in the wind. He had already regretted having given the girl permission to let her father into their secret.

"How much do I owe you, Dick Bristol?" the mayor demanded, loud enough for all to hear.

There was quite a number on the piazza, and of course every eye was upon the pair instantly.

"I am not aware that you owe me anything, sir," was the cool response. "Why do you ask?"

"Because I am done with your services here, that's the reason I ask. Now, the sooner you can take yourself off the better I shall like it."

"Hol that's it, eh?" and the detective rose to his feet. "Well, Mr. Hancock, I came here for a purpose, and I'm not going to retire till that is accomplished. I am not here under pay, and do not accept my discharge from you or any other man."

"We'll see about that. You may defy me, but you won't defy the whole camp, I guess. Men of See-Saw, what is your opinion of a married man who will deliberately make love to a young girl and engage himself to marry her? That is what this fellow has done with Tessie Weeds."

There was instantly a howl.

Tessie was the pride of the camp, and hardly a man there but was ready to do battle in her behalf.

Several men stepped forward, grim looks upon their faces, and their hands upon weapons. They awaited only a signal from the mayor, and it might have fared roughly with the detective.

There came, however, another interruption.

"Hold on! hold on! hold on!" some one sung out, and who should push to the fore but Barnabas Balaam, both hands raised to enjoin peace. "Don't let your angry passions rise and get ther best of ye, men of See-Saw," he rejoined in words. "Let me scatter some oil on the troubled waters."

"You shut right up and get out," cried Hancock, "or I'll order you hanged. We are in no mood for fooling."

"Neither am I," retorted Barnabas. "I was just working up steam for my temperance lecture, and I'm at high pressure. Don't crowd me, or my biler may bust and do more damage than you could repair in a week. Your charity suffered long and was kind to Tom-tom Tom for beatin' his tom-tom: you must do likewise with me and allow me to toot my bazoo. Hear ye! hear ye! hear ye!"

This brought a laugh from some in the crowd, and the temperance advocate was allowed to say more.

"I don't like to see shootin' and killin'," he declared, in something of his occasional dialect. "That grates upon my nerves almost as bad as the sight of unholy intemperance irritates my gail. Now, to avoid all necessity for it, let me propose a plan that is generally effective when a camp gets right up and means business. Why don't you give the young man twenty-four hours or so to make a vacant spot here of his size and shape, and then if he don't go— Well, when the worst comes to the worst I shut my eyes."

"You can have it either way you want it," gentlemen," the detective spoke.

He stood in a careless way, and all who knew anything about the reputation of Deadwood Dick felt a good deal like accepting the proposition the temperance advocate had made.

"I'll make it that," declared the mayor, prudent in spite of his rage. "I'll give you just twenty-four hours to get out of this camp, Dick Bristol, and if you don't go I'll not answer for the result. And, I'll take care to make known your scandalous conduct, anyhow."

"Very well, sir, I accept the terms," and the detective very coolly resumed his seat.

"Howlin' Hiram!" cried Mr. Balaam. "That's what I'd call cool, mayor! He don't turn a hair. Pilgrims from Yan! but I love this here detective fellow; I vow I do. And it looks like a shame to turn him away before he has had a square chance to get a dig at Satan Sam. I'm sorry I didn't say a week instead of twenty-four hours. I am interested, and I'd like to see the end of the game. Besides— Hello! thar's somethin' ye forgot, mayor, sure!"

Excited, he dropped into the dialect.

"What's that?" the mayor asked.

"Why, ther demand he has posted up, ye know. He has challenged the Scorpions, ye know, or what 'mounts to pretty much ther same thing."

"He may have reason to wish he had never heard of the Scorpions, if they hear of his dastardly conduct," was the angry retort. "I have given you twenty-four hours, Dick Bristol, but you will be wise if you make it twenty-four minutes. I tell you you are not wanted here at

See-Saw. It was a mistake when we sent for you."

"Don't trouble yourself further about me," the detective quietly said.

"I don't intend to," was the retort. "You have been fairly warned, and if you are a man of sense you will heed the warning."

With that the mayor wheeled around and went off in the direction of the mine offices.

One man who had been a quiet observer of all this now stepped to the front.

This was Ben Blunt, and he said:

"Pards of See-Saw," looking around over the group, "et don't seem ter me necessary fer us ter get into a sweat about this matter. We have heard only one side of the story, and we know Hancock is sweet on ther gal and that accounts fer a good deal. S'pose we hear what this gentleman has ter say fer himself?"

"That's ther idee!"

"I have nothing to say except this," declared the detective. "It is true, since the secret is out, that I have won a promise of marriage from Miss Weeds, and I am free to marry whom I will. This needs a little explanation, but I am not prepared to give it now. You may take my word or not, just as you please."

"That's right from ther shoulder!" cried Barnabas Balaam. "I say now as I said at ther start, give the young man a fair show. He's modest, we can all see that, and needs ter be encouraged, no matter what his reputation is. Give him a fair show, and see how it comes out. Oh! I am fairly in a fever to see the end of this business, and to see Satan Sam brought to the front and made to take his bitters. I hope the Scorpions will come forth and accept the young man's demand. Yes, yes, I'm fairly in a fever, and there's only one thing for me to do, and that is to give you a lecture on temperance. There's no other way in which I can work off the pressure."

With his words, he sprung to a chair, and with a wave of the hand opened his mouth.

Before he spoke a word, though, there came suddenly the thump-a-thump of the tom-tom to the surprise of everybody, and Tom-tom Tom was seen coming down the street.

Mr. Balaam continued to hold his mouth wide open, and his hand outstretched just where it had stopped at the end of the flourish he had made, and he gazed upon the bummer as he drew near with an expression hard to define.

Thump-a-thump! thump-a-thump! came the bummer, and presently he was abreast with the hotel. He looked neither way, though, but went straight on, thump-a-thump, thump-a-thump! thump-a-thump! thump! and there was such a charm about the music that the very dogs in the neighborhood began to howl.

"Wretched, wretched man!" cried the temperance advocate. "I wonder if he cannot be shamed into reforming, since bullets seem to have no lasting effect upon him. Verily I believe I will try it."

The attention of the crowd was won in an instant, and the detective was delivered for the time being from unpleasant scrutiny.

As the bummer passed, Mr. Balaam ran lightly down the steps and fell in behind him, when he began to sing—rather bawl—at the top of his voice the one verse of what was perhaps the only song he ever knew, and it was plain that he did not know even that.

"Gayly the troubadour sung o' Kafoozalem
As he came plodding his way from Jerusalem,
And the old Huck-a-buck hearing him come,
Cried Rum-a-tum, rum-a-tum, rum-a-tum-tum!"

Tom-tom Tom had glanced around at the first outbreak, but immediately attended to business again, and so they marched to the end of the camp.

They were two of a kind, as near as could be, except for the rummy appearance of the bummer's face, of which Mr. Balaam had none. Otherwise they were two about as hard-looking cases as can be imagined.

At the end of the camp the bummer turned and started back again, thumping away with all his might, while the temperance man bawled as loud as he could bawl, keeping time, and it would have been hard to decide which was the worst, the beating of the tom-tom or the singing.

Taking both together, it was more than the worthy citizens could stand, and by the time the pair again reached the Square in front of the hotel several men were ready to buy the bummer up.

They rushed forward to meet him, and three or four had pressed money upon him before they became aware of what they were doing. They

were seemingly glad to have the noise stopped at any price.

"Thanks, dear sir, thanks!" cried the bummer, turning upon Mr. Balaam. "But for you I might have been compelled to beat the tom-tom for half an hour before I could have tired them out. It was the singing they could not stand. Thanks, sir, thanks. Believe me, I go now to drink your good health."

CHAPTER XV.

THE SCORPIONS' STING.

BARNABAS BALAAAM looked after the retreating form of the bummer for a moment in silence, and then he began to wring his hands, while he raised his voice in wailing and lamentation.

"What have I done? What have I done? What have I done?" he cried aloud, in much agony of mind. "Have I been the means of providing yon wretch with the wherewith to gratify his unholy appetite? Mercies forbid! Certainly my intention was good enough."

The crowd around enjoyed the situation hugely, and a roar of laughter greeted the remarks of the temperance advocate.

"Verily, verily, I must redeem the time," Mr. Balaam declared. "Here I have been neglecting my work, and for what? For nothing! I must deliver a lecture here and now against the curse of rum."

Taking a chair from the piazza of the hotel, he carried it out to the middle of the Square, where he mounted it and began to exhort, and for half an hour or more he gave the crowd a free "circus," such as they had not enjoyed in a month. It was the general verdict that Barnabas Balaam was a character unique.

The rest of that day was unusually quiet.

Nothing worthy of note took place, and it might have been marked as the calm before a storm.

Mayor Hancroft had cut loose from the detective entirely, and had not addressed him once since their hot words of the morning.

The detective did not appear to mourn about this, but sat on the piazza of the hotel for the most part of the time, idly smoking, talking occasionally with those who spoke to him.

There did not appear to be any indication that he intended to take the warning he had received. He was certainly in no hurry about going, anyhow.

Late in the day Ben Blunt joined him.

"Ye don't seem ter be in no haste about gettin' up an' gittin'," he made remark.

"No, I'm not breaking my neck to get away," was the response.

"And, I take et, ye don't mean ter go."

The detective smiled.

"You have hit it about right," he said.

"You are just my style," the man declared.

"I like ter see grit. You stay hyer, and ef ye want any backin', call on Ben Blunt."

"I hadn't forgotten your offer, sir. I'm going to stay, for I came here with a purpose and it has not yet been accomplished. If I need help before I get done with this thing I'll call on you."

"Don't ye forget et. And now, pard, on the sly, hyer's a note fer ye."

As he spoke, the fellow slipped a bit of paper into the detective's hand so that none might see.

"Ha!" was the exclamation. "A note, eh? I think I can guess whom it is from before I look at it. You have heard about— But, I know you have."

"About you and Miss Weeds? Yes, I know all about et. And, pard, I want ye to answer me one question fair and square: Are you free ter marry that gal as ye hev 'greed ter do?"

"Ben Blunt, I am."

The eyes of the two men met, and there was the ring of truth in the statement.

"I believe ye, pard," said Blunt. "I'm with ye, now, to ther end. But, ef ye play me false, and ef ye deceive that gal, ther Lord help ye."

"You'll find me true, my friend."

"Ef I don't, ye will have a score ter settle wif Ben Blunt, that's all. I hev brung ther note from ther gal."

"As I supposed."

The detective now opened the tiny missive and read it. It was contained in these lines:

"DEAR DICK:—

"Won't you assure papa that it's all right? He believes you are married, and he has never treated me so harshly before. I know you are true, but I cannot prove it to him. You are true, are you not? If you have deceived me I shall die. But, I know you have not!"

"Yours till death,

"TESSIE."

"Can you see her and talk with her?" the

detective asked of the messenger, when he had read to the end.

"Yes, I kin work et so, pard."

"Then I will not write anything, for it might get her into deeper trouble, but you may tell her this: That I am so placed that I cannot do as she requests to-day, but that she need have no doubts. Whatever appearances may be, I am true—I swear it. Tell her to keep up her courage."

"I'll do et, pard. I believe ye, but, as I said 'fore, ther Lord help ye ef ye prove false. I love that gal like a darter, I do, and I'll fight like a daddy fer her, ef need be."

"You won't find the need to fight me, old friend."

The day closed, and night came on, and still that air of oppressiveness appeared to hang over the camp.

There was no excitement whatever, greater than that occasioned by Tom-tom Tom, who appeared once more and beat upon his tom-tom till a committee of three fell upon him and wrested the instrument of torture from him and broke it into splinters, to the dismay of the bummer and the delight of the temperance advocate.

The evening passed, the lights went out one by one, and finally the camp slumbered.

The hour was late when Detective Bristol was suddenly awakened from his sleep, and he sprang up with a start.

Four masked men were in his room, one holding a bull's-eye lantern so that its light fell upon the detective's face and the others covering him with their revolvers.

"Not a word," warned one in a hoarse whisper, "but get up and dress yourself."

"All right, gentlemen," was the cheery response in the same tone, regardless of the warning. "You hold the best hand and I'm at your service."

Without undue haste, and without any apparent nervousness in his manner, the detective put himself into his clothes, and finally he announced that he was ready for whatever was required of him.

"Now, you will come with us," spoke the leader. "We are of the Scorpions of See-Saw, and we have some business to settle with you."

"The Scorpions, eh? Then you are aware of the demand I have made, I suppose, of course."

"Yes, we know all about your blank foolishness."

Two of the fellows who had put away their weapons now took hold of the detective and bound his hands behind him, after which they put a blindfold over his eyes, and warning him to maintain silence if he valued his life they led him out of the room, out of the house, and away.

He was taken a considerable distance.

Although unable to see, he had been able to determine the direction in which he was being conducted from the hotel, and when the night air grew presently more chill he knew they had entered the western canyon.

After a time there was some climbing up a pretty difficult trail, and soon after that the air grew yet more chill and the resounding of their feet told they had entered a cavern. By the echo it gave forth, too, it was evidently one of no mean dimensions.

At last a stop was made, and the bandage was removed from the prisoner's eyes and he was permitted to look around.

He found himself in a circle composed of a score or more of masked men.

"Well, Deadwood Dick," spoke the leader, "what do you think of us? We are the Scorpions, whom you have challenged."

"You are a pretty decent looking set of fellows, as near as I am able to judge of you," was the easy response. "You make a mistake about my having challenged you however; I merely made a demand."

"It amounts to the same thing."

"That is according to how you look at it, I should say."

"We choose to look at it our way, then. Did you not see the notice we posted by the trail some distance out of camp?"

"I did not. You know it was dark when I came in that night."

"Well, you heard about it, which is all the same. Why did you not pay heed to it?"

"I did not choose to. Did you ever hear of Deadwood Dick's playing the poltroon? I came to See-Saw for a purpose, and it has not been accomplished."

"Do you think it ever will be?"

"Perhaps."

"We very much doubt it. But, that aside. You came here with the intention of taking a piece of work out of our hands and taking the credit of it to yourself, and we don't propose to allow that!"

"No?"

"No, decidedly!"

"You refer to the capture of Satan Sam, of course."

"Exactly. We think we are capable of doing all that any one can do on that case, and since we have begun it we are going to carry it out."

"That is the proper thing, gentlemen. But, you do me injustice. I came here not to rob you of any glory whatever, but to aid you. My demand was that I be allowed to work with you."

"Well, we don't want any help. Then, too, you said that if we didn't see fit to take up with your demand, then you would consider us no better than outlaws ourselves, and treat us accordingly; or words to that effect."

"Exactly."

"Well, we are not going to grant your demand. We are going to work this claim ourselves."

"That settles it, then; we don't pull together. I consider you as little better than Satan himself. What are you going to do about it?"

"Well, that is cool."

"No need to get heated over it, as I can see."

"You defy us, then, do you? You are in a poor position to do that, Deadwood Dick."

"Call it that if you want to, gentlemen. Since you will not take up my offer I must go it alone. You have the best of it, I admit. Still, I may get there by-and-by."

"We doubt that, too. But, here is what we are going to do about it, and if you don't like it there is something else you can do: We are going to hold you a prisoner here till we have made the capture, and then you will be allowed to go. That is all we have to say. Men, secure him."

CHAPTER XVI.

TRUTH TRIUMPHANT.

THE detective was led to a place in the cavern where a ring of iron had been affixed to the wall, and where he was secured by his hands, which were still behind his back.

"You need have no fear of being allowed to starve," said the leader, then, "for we will take care of you in that respect, but here you must remain till we have made the capture of Satan Sam, when you will be allowed to go. It will be useless for you to strain your lungs calling for help, for no one could possibly hear you."

"I shall take it easy, gentlemen," was the response coolly made. "I appreciate the fact that you have not killed me, and that you promise me I shall not starve. This is the way Deadwood Dick's demand has been received. Very well, I will remember it. I wish you all success in your hunt for the outlaw, and hope you will find him soon."

A brief exchange of further remarks, and the masked men filed out of the cavern, leaving the detective there alone in the darkness and solitude.

Alone?

They had not been gone a great while when a form stole up to the detective's side, and, after feeling a moment, a keen blade severed the bonds which held him to the iron ring.

"You are promptly on hand," whispered the prisoner.

"As I promised I would be," was the response. "Let us wait a few moments more and we'll make a light."

They were silent for some time, to make sure their foes had all gone out of sight and hearing, and finally the rescuer turned on the light of a bull's-eye and lighted up the scene.

It would have been a surprise for the Scorpions, could they have seen who the new-comer was.

The man was none other than Barnabas Balaam, the temperance advocate.

"Now we are ready for business," the peculiar man said. "We have the rest of the night before us, without danger of interruption."

He spoke now with neither the dialect nor the peculiar twang he had employed before, but with a straightforward language that had the true ring about it.

"And that means that we are to begin the exploration of this cavern at once, I suppose," the late prisoner observed. "Very well, let's be about it, for I am in a hurry to see the matter cleared up."

"I suppose so," with a light laugh.

"Strange, wasn't it? Well, it could not be helped."

"Yes, strange, truly: and it came near spoiling our plans altogether. But, we'll come out all right now."

Whatever they meant, they enjoyed a laugh together over it, and together they went forward into the cavern, exploring it as they advanced, apparently in search of something in particular.

They soon found they had undertaken a larger work than they had imagined.

There were several branches of the cavern, and by the time they had explored three or four of them as far as they could penetrate, as many hours had slipped by.

"We do not seem to find it in anything of a hurry," remarked the detective, as they returned again to the main chamber.

"No, but I am sure it is here somewhere," responded the advocate of temperance. "We'll try this narrower passage to the left this time. By going right we got left, maybe by going left we'll be right."

After a little rest they set out anew.

Turning into a narrow passage that opened on the left of the main chamber, they proceeded along it, examining carefully as they proceeded.

It widened out, presently, and was similar in all respects to the others through which they had passed. After a time, however, the floor took a downward tendency.

"This looks more like it," said the temperance advocate, then.

"I agree with you," responded the detective. "I think we'll get there, now, sure."

Finally something ahead caught and reflected the light they carried, and with an exclamation both sprung forward at an increased pace, soon to find themselves at the edge of a sheet of water.

"This is it!" cried the detective.

"I certainly believe it is. But, how to prove it?"

It was Mr. Balaam who carried the light, and after some moments of thought he turned the slide and shut the light off.

The darkness was intense, of course, but in a moment when their eyes had become slightly used to it both together uttered an exclamation as another discovery was made.

In the water was seen a band, or belt, of light, something like a phosphorescent glow faintly seen. It was some distance from where they stood, and its outline was very irregular. It looked not unlike the reflection of an exit somewhere near at hand.

"The secret is out!" cried the detective.

"And it is just what I thought," said the other, quietly. "It is a passage under water, to the mysterious lake. It is the moon that gives the light we see."

There was no doubting it. Such was the explanation of the mysterious manner in which Satan Sam had eluded pursuit. Diving into the lake, he had swum under water through the passage and into the cavern.

And that being so, other facts were made certain to the detectives—we may as well call them so, now. If Satan Sam and these Scorpions both made the cavern their place of hiding, they must be working together. And from that it was only a step to the suspicion that Satan Sam was the head of the band.

While they stood there, talking the matter over, still looking toward the patch of light as it was revealed through the water, they heard a sound as of the hoof-strokes of many horses. And these, coming nearer each moment, were soon heard to be directly overhead. Then came a darkening for a moment of the patch of light, after which it wavered and appeared to grow lighter and darker by quick turns.

Presently into it was plainly discernible the form of a man, swimming with steady, powerful stroke, and the two detectives exchanged a word of triumph with each other.

The figure soon disappeared, and then was heard a man's deep breathing, with the gentle plash of the water as he came swimming to the shore.

The detectives made never a sound, but waited.

On came the man, and presently he was heard to strike the shore and to draw himself out upon the rocky floor of the cavern.

He was not a dozen feet away from the shadows, and as they heard him get upon his feet the light of the bull's-eye was turned upon him by the temperance advocate, while the other covered him with a revolver.

"Satan Sam, surrender!"

Such was the stern command that fell upon the man's astonished ears, and his face grew pale as he realized that he was trapped.

"It's no use," cried Mr. Balaam; "we have

got the bulge on you as big as a barrel. This may be a surprise for you, but it is none for us, for we have suspected you from the first."

Even while speaking, the disguised detective had stepped forward and snapped a pair of handcuffs upon the astounded outlaw's wrists.

And then, when it was too late, the man began to struggle to get away. He soon found the folly of that, however, and began to beg for liberty, promising any amount of money if they would only let him go.

But, he might as well have talked to the rocky walls around him; the detectives were not to be moved.

The tread of hoofs, if the distant echo could be called hearing it direct, still sounded above, and for a considerable time. Then the retreat was plainly made out, after which silence reigned.

It was then the two detectives with their prisoner returned to the main cavern, where they held a long consultation to arrange their further plans.

Next day two men were missing from See-saw.

One of these was the mayor, Henry Hancroft, and the other was Deadwood Dick the detective.

No one could be found who could offer any explanation of the absence of either. Where they had gone, or why, was a mystery.

It was hinted that perhaps they had retired somewhere to fight out their rivalry for the hand of pretty Tessie Weeds; but, even that did not suffice, since it was believed that one would certainly have returned.

The day passed, and no explanation was forthcoming.

In the evening many fellows were conspicuous by their absence, had any one taken trouble to note the fact, which no one did, apparently.

Among these were Barnabas Balaam, Ben Blunt, and others whom Blunt had picked out as trustworthy citizens, together with quite a number who had evidently been in secret league with the temperance advocate.

Late in the evening, though, it began to be wondered where all the "boys" could be, and it was suggested that perhaps they had all gone out with the hope of making the arrest of Satan Sam, who, by the way, had made a raid on the camp on the previous night.

On that occasion he had been surprised by some vigilant citizens, and they had given him a hard run to the lake, where he had leaped in, horse and all, and disappeared as on other occasions, though the horse swam to shore and was helped out and captured. That, as can be imagined, had been the one topic of conversation all day.

In the evening Tom-tom Tom had come forth with his tom-tom, but the denizens of See-Saw were in no mood to hearken long to it, and on the motion of one man the bummer was taken to the lock-up and cabled for the night.

It was midnight when the masked men assembled once again in the secret cavern.

Near by was the detective prisoner, in the same position he had been left in by the Scorpions on the previous night. They had found him there that morning, when two had come to bring him something to eat.

"The captain certainly is dead," one brought a long talk to its climax. "He has certainly missed it this time, and has been drowned. That being so, our work is at an end, and there remains nothing for us to do but to divide the spoils and get away as soon as we can."

There was prompt approval.

"And there is no excuse for putting it off a minute," the spokesman went on. "The sooner we get away the better for one and all. As to this detective, he can be left right here until we can send word back to the citizens where to find him. Come on, and we'll make the division at once; it's just as well the captain does not come in for his. So much the more for the rest of us. The Scorpions are in luck this deal."

With loud laughter they removed to another part of the cavern.

No sooner had they gone than Barnabas Balaam crept forward and released the prisoner, as before, and at the same time men seemed to rise up out of the very ground, so quickly were a score or more on hand, under the leadership of Ben Blunt. And these, with muffled feet, moved silently forward after the band of masked men, presently coming upon them at the place where they had stopped, and where they were in the act of prying up a flat stone in the rocky floor.

This they were permitted to do, and then with a yell the other party sprung forward upon

them, revolvers drawn, and demanding their instant surrender.

It was a surprise complete, and it was followed up before reaction could come and resistance be offered. In a few moments the whole masked band had been securely bound.

No words were wasted there, but the victors, with their prisoners, including Satan Sam himself, set out for the camp of See-Saw.

When they arrived there they marched into the Square with loud cheering, and the whole population was speedily out to learn what was the cause of all the uproar.

It was seen at once, for there was the detective, with Barnabas Balaam, Ben Blunt, and the rest, with their prisoners, and as soon as the situation was taken in fully, louder cheering was heard.

The moon was high and bright, and the Square was as light as day, and a bearing was called for then and there.

"Very well," said the detective, stepping forward into the open space, "you shall have it. Let me introduce to your notice Mr. Richard Bristol, or Deadwood Dick, Junior, whose role I have been assuming for a purpose which you can now understand without explanation on my part."

He waved his hand, and Barnabas Balaam stepped out and made a bow.

"That is my name, gentlemen," he said, and with a sweep of the hand he removed all disguise from his head and face. "If we have played a little deception upon you it has been with a purpose. My ally here is Mr. Charles Paige, one of the governor's men. He has played his role well, and would have done better had he not fallen in love with the belle of your town. But, that is all right, and I wish him all the happiness possible. But, you are eager to see who these prisoners are. We will unmask them for your benefit."

Satan Sam had been disguised like the others, a spare outfit having been found in the cavern, and they were all now stationed in a row.

"These men," Dick went on, "are Satan Sam and his band of Scorpions. Do not be surprised. The Scorpions were not what they pretended to be. Now, this first here is Satan Sam. Behold!"

With a quick movement Dick removed the disguise, and there stood forth the mayor of the camp, Henry Hancroft!

The excitement can be better imagined than described.

The others were quickly exposed in turn, and proved to be well-known men of the camp, ones who would have been least suspected of such business, least of all the mayor.

"There they are, every one of them!" cried Dick. "What do you think of your worthy fellow-citizens, men of See-Saw? These are the men who were robbing the mines, the mails, the Express and everything else. It was their intention to reap the rich harvest as long as possible, when they would leave the camp suddenly and take their ill-gotten wealth with them. But, I suppose you want the story of my work here in full. Very well; you shall have it."

"I was sent her by Governor Woodlow, upon whom this rascal has imposed for a long time. I saw the difficulties in the way. I made my arrangements accordingly. I came here in a disguise which none would be likely to suspect, and in order to make it doubly secure I had Mr. Paige personate myself openly. You see how it worked. I had a specimen of Satan Sam's handwriting, and when I got here it did not take me long to discover that it was the same as that of your worthy mayor, in spite of the slight attempt at disguise."

"While Mr. Paige was keeping attention drawn to himself, I was at work, and here is the result. I followed some of the Scorpions, when they were called to assemble at their rendezvous by the signal for that purpose, which was the drumming upon the keg by Tom-tom Tom— Ha! that surprises you? Yes, that was only a clever signal for the evil crew to assemble, and I was not long getting onto it. Once the cavern had been found, I knew the rest would be easy. Mr. Paige put up a notice of demand, in my name, and that led to his being taken prisoner. I was on hand to release him, and together we explored the cavern until we found the secret of the lake."

Dick went on at length, making a full revelation of all that has been shown the reader, and when he had done the camp gave him a rousing cheer. The prisoners were guarded well until morning, when they were sent away under strong guard to the nearest point where they could be turned over to the authorities. The lost treasure was nearly all recovered, that of Timothy Weeds among the rest. Needless to

say Timothy was a happy man. Explanations followed all around. Tessie Weeds cared nothing for the fact that her lover's name was Paige instead of Bristol; it was the man himself she was in love with, and he would have been as dear to her by any other name. The revelation cleared that matter up at once, and there was soon a wedding, in which Charles Paige and Tessie were the ones most concerned.

When Dick returned to report to the governor, he was highly complimented upon the manner in which he had brought the mystery to an end. He had left many good friends at the distant camp. It was a place which, soon after, took on another name, and now, in looking at a map to find "See-Saw" it cannot be discovered by that appellation. But, the old place is there, nevertheless, though now enjoying a title better fitted for approval as the name for a rapidly growing young city. It is no more troubled with the Scorpions, whom the law scorched severely, and it is not likely to see any of them for some time to come. Some, in fact, will never trouble the place with their presence more, for their crimes brought them to the gallows. And among them was Satan Sam. His career had been a bold and daring one, and he might have carried it further, had he not overreached himself in his pretended determination to capture the outlaw, thus to keep all suspicion from himself.

It was the same old story, the downfall of evil and the setting up of truth and right. And so it must be in every case. The time may be longer or shorter, but the end is sure. Right must triumph, and truth be put upon the throne at last.

THE END.

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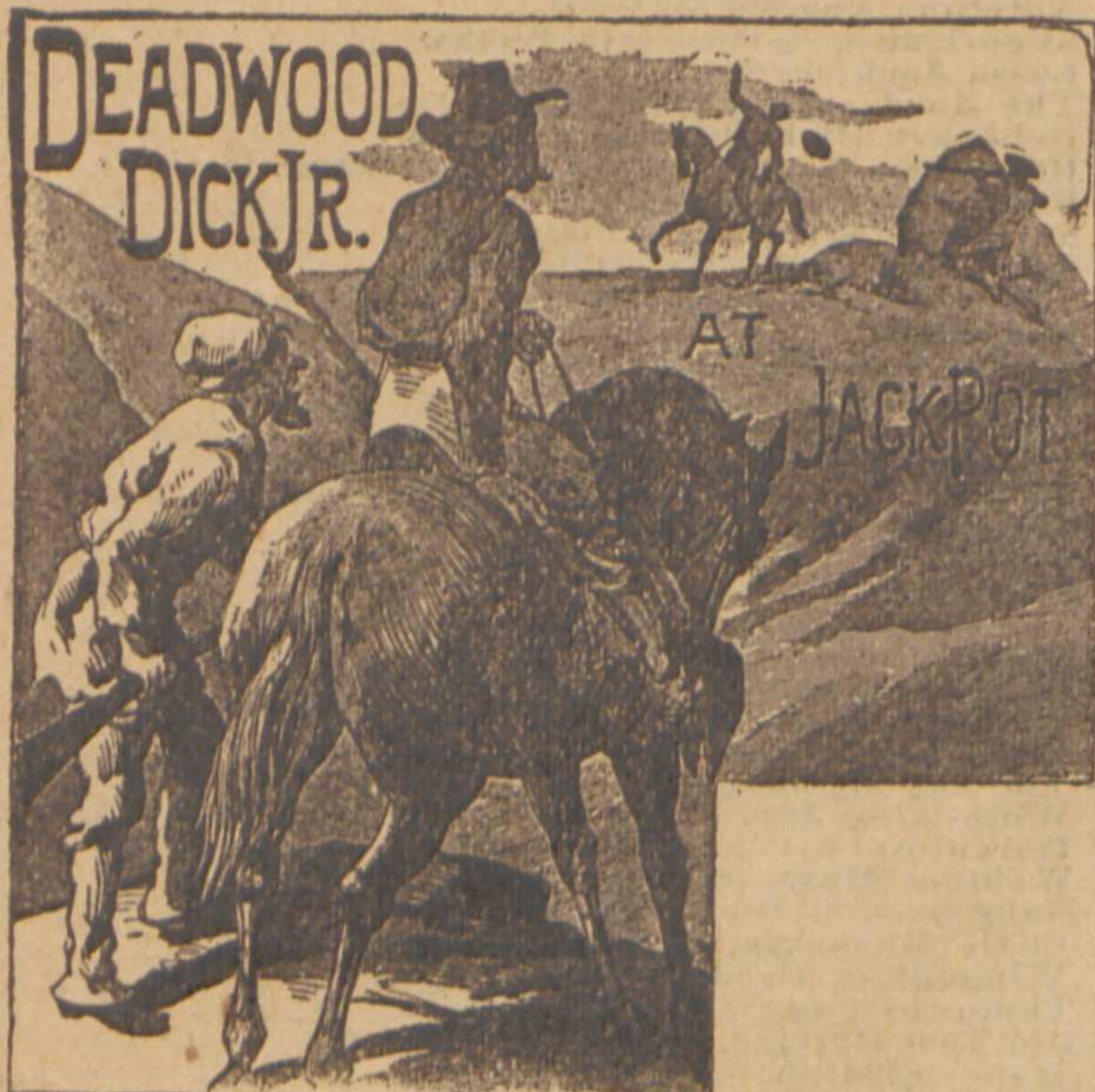
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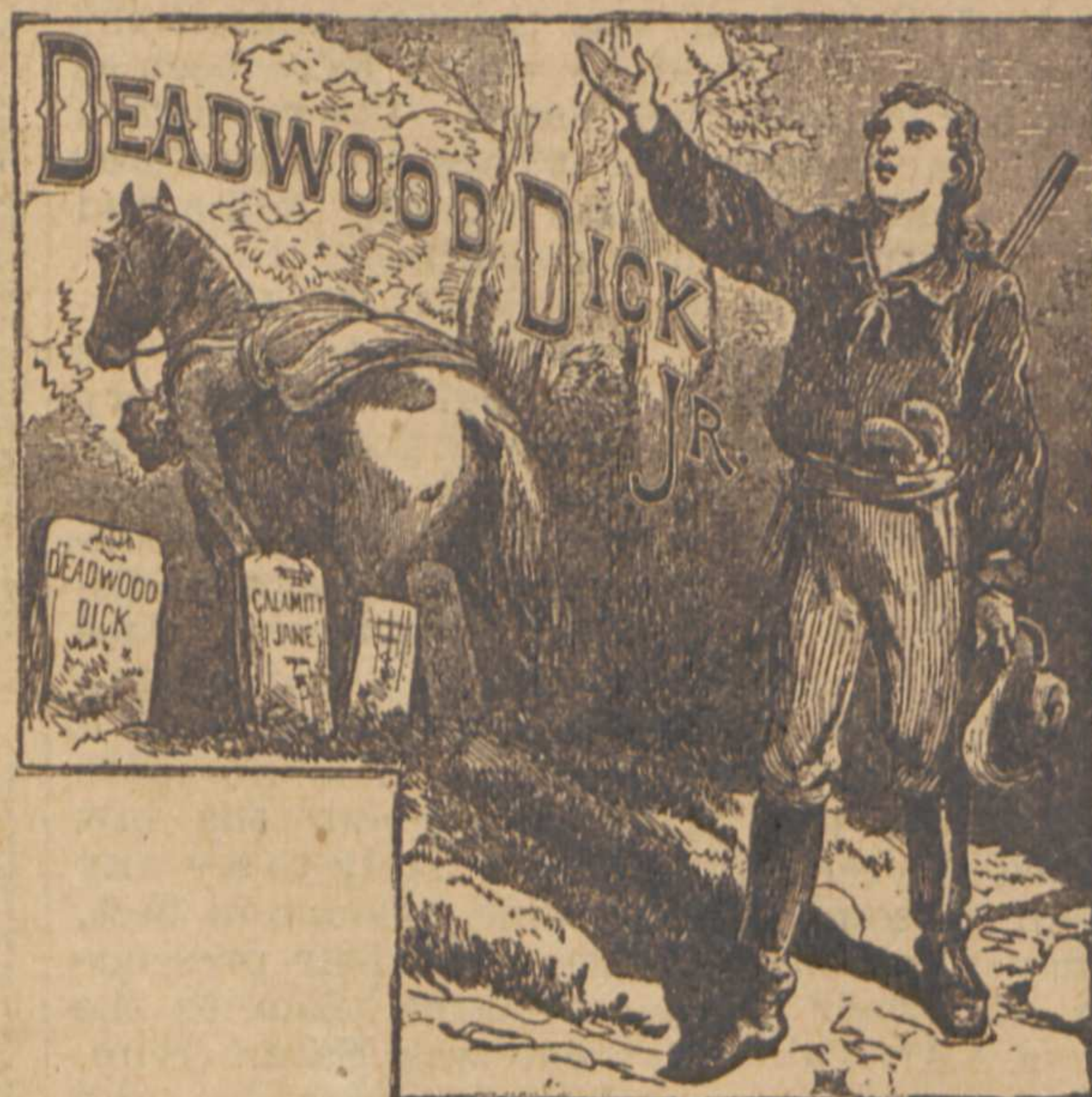
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